

NEWS LESSON

Bored at Work and Still Exhausted

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Can an easy job still leave someone exhausted?
2. Would you rather have too much to do or too little?
3. What makes a quiet afternoon feel different from a boring one?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**exhausted**	☐	A	the things you are able to do well
2	**burnout**	☐	B	being able to do what you want
3	**stress**	☐	C	worry and pressure that make you feel bad
4	**psychologists**	☐	D	people who study how the mind works
5	**skills**	☐	E	things you can do well because you learned them
6	**solution**	☐	F	an answer to a problem
7	**freedom**	☐	G	feeling ill and tired after too much stress at work
8	**abilities**	☐	H	very, very tired

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Psychologists call it rust-out. Work that is too easy or too repetitive can wear someone down for weeks or months.

1 Imagine sitting at your desk all day with almost nothing interesting to do. You check the clock again and again. At five o'clock, you go home feeling completely exhausted. How can doing so little make you so tired?

2 Most of us know the word burnout. It describes the effects of long periods of stress at work. But psychologists also talk about rust-out, which can happen when work is too easy, too repetitive or has little meaning. The American Psychological Association discussed this problem in a September 2026 article.

3 A person experiencing rust-out may have many small tasks but few chances to pick up new skills. They might spend the day copying information into a computer or attending meetings where nobody needs their ideas. Other people may think they have an easy job. Inside, however, they feel bored and frustrated.

4 Boredom at work is not always harmless. Over time, it can make concentrating difficult. Someone may stop caring about their tasks and begin to doubt their abilities. They might want another job but feel unable to leave because they need the money.

5 There is no simple solution. A worker could take on a new project, more responsibility or training. Managers can also look at how jobs are organised and give people more freedom. However, not every workplace can offer exciting work all the time.

6 A difficult part of rust-out is explaining it to other people. Imagine telling a friend that your job is too easy. They might reply that you are lucky because their work is stressful. You may then stop talking about your problem. But feeling bored for a whole day is not always the same as having free time to enjoy.

7 At work, you often have to remain at your desk and look busy, even when there is nothing useful to do. You cannot simply leave and take a long walk. That loss of freedom can make the hours feel even longer. A short, quiet period at work may be welcome. Rust-out is different because the feeling continues for weeks or months and starts to affect how someone thinks about themselves.

8 Being busy and being interested are not the same thing. People usually need more than a salary or a full day of tasks. They also want to feel that their time and abilities are being used for something worthwhile.

Sources: American Psychological Association. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. A short quiet period at work is the same as rust-out. (T) (F) (NG)
2. The American Psychological Association wrote about this problem in September 2026. (T) (F) (NG)
3. Rust-out is more common in offices than in factories. (T) (F) (NG)
4. Rust-out can happen when work is too easy or repetitive. (T) (F) (NG)
5. The text says managers can do nothing to help. (T) (F) (NG)

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

concentrate	doubt	harmless	meaning	salary	unable	worthwhile

1. It is hard to _____ on your homework when the television is on.
2. After three failed exams, he began to _____ his own ability.
3. The job was dull, but the _____ was high enough to pay the rent.
4. She left her office job because she wanted work that felt _____ .
5. A quiet joke in the office is usually _____ , so nobody needs to worry.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Imagine _____ at your desk all day with almost nothing to do. (SIT)
2. The American Psychological Association _____ this problem in 2026. (DISCUSS)
3. Someone may stop _____ about their tasks. (CARE)
4. Last night, she _____ home feeling very tired. (GO)
5. Rust-out is different because the feeling _____ for weeks or months. (CONTINUE)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some verbs go naturally with certain nouns. Think about which verb you usually hear with each word.

change	drive	make	pay	solve	take	waste

1. At lunchtime, many workers _____ a short break and go for a walk.
2. Boring work makes it hard to _____ attention to small details.
3. People often _____ mistakes when they are very tired.
4. Copying numbers all day felt like a _____ of time.
5. She wanted to _____ her job because it was too easy.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What could a manager change before adding more tasks?
2. When does boredom become a reason to leave a job?
3. Could a more interesting life outside work make an ordinary job easier to enjoy?

9 Role-play: a talk about a boring job

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the manager

Your employee looks tired and bored. Find out what is wrong. The team is short of staff, so you cannot give them a new role this month. Offer something smaller, or say no politely.

Student B · the employee

Your job is too easy and you feel tired every day. Ask your manager for more interesting work and more freedom to choose your tasks. Explain why it matters to you.

Useful phrases

I'd like to talk about my tasks.

I'm finding the work a bit too easy.

That's not something I expected to hear.

We're short of staff right now, so I can't promise anything.

Could I take on a small project?

Let's try it for a month and see.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the manager agree to change anything, and was it a fair deal?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 G · 3 C · 4 D · 5 E · 6 F · 7 B · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 F · 2 T · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 concentrate · 2 doubt · 3 salary · 4 worthwhile · 5 harmless

6 Verb forms

1 sitting · 2 discussed · 3 caring · 4 went · 5 continues

7 Language focus

1 take · 2 pay · 3 make · 4 waste · 5 change

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