

# Adventures at AIMS...coming together as a community

## *The Gift of Boredom*

Typically, one does not think of boredom as a gift. We are naturally inclined to frown upon it and avoid it at all costs. Today's use of electronics and social media supports this avoidance well. The constant shifting of tasks on our digital devices helps distract us and prevent us from receiving the gift.

A 2014 study at the University of Virginia exposed just how far people will go to fend off boredom. Participants spent 15 minutes in a room without any external stimulus. This meant they had no music, no books, no phones or anything else for entertainment. However, participants were given one device that could administer a painful shock. Surprisingly, over 25% of the participants chose to use it and shock themselves. These participants actually chose pain over boredom (Wilson et al., 2014).

In most of today's classrooms, teachers generally move from one assignment or project to another to avoid students having the chance to day dream or zone out. Teachers do not want their class to be considered "boring" or dull. The natural inclination is to switch up activities quickly and regularly to avoid student's eyes glazing over.

However, it must not be forgotten that boredom sparks creative thinking. It is no coincidence that great ideas come to us in simplicity while in a shower or doing the dishes and can be true in the classroom as well. It is through mindfulness, a rest and presence of the mind, that our problem-solving abilities increase. We can think outside of the box and make unlikely connections. Boredom actually leads to an openness and willingness to new thought and as a result it is a discipline that should be cultivated.

Our Montessori classrooms intentionally cultivate this discipline through child-driven activities. The teacher does not entertain students with projects or assignments but allows boredom and activity to spiral in and out of meaningful work and discovery. Students have the ability to change up their pace of learning. The goal is for our students to use boredom strategically for the vitality of their creative process. Boredom is a wonderful gift.

(Adapted from *Educational Leadership*, Spencer, 2018)