

Notworkenoughtofillthedaylius

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I remember the devastating day it happened: I had reached the end of the internet. You are probably getting the wrong impression of me. I am not a huge fan of the internet, and, under normal circumstances, I don't spend much time on it. But a few months ago, I was an addict. To make matters worse, my condition was highly contagious. The other associates that worked in my section at my old firm suffered from it as well.

What, you ask, was the cause of this widespread plague, and how can I keep it from infecting me and my co-workers? I'm sad to report that there is no known cure at this time, but it is at least helpful to know the cause. The medical name is *notworkenoughtofillthedaylius*. Its street name is "bored out of my mind."

So, how did it begin to spread at my firm? It started with the departure of several of the partners in my section. Not all the partners, mind you, just the ones with business. What followed was several months of reassurances from management that, despite the fact that we were all sitting around twiddling our respective thumbs, our jobs were secure. They informed us that they were working to fix the problem. So, my fellow associates and I waited. And waited. And waited. In our offices. In front of the computer. With nothing to do. Computer screen beckoning. We seemed to collectively figure out that although we had no memos to revise, our Facebook pages needed some fixing. And our LinkedIn pages. And our...I'm sure you understand the genesis of our disease by now. Sadly, given the lack of work and number of layoffs proliferating, you are not immune.

"Bored out of my mind" syndrome has other known symptoms besides excessive internet use. For instance, you may experience lack of interest in making nicey-nicey with partners, frequent two-hour lunches, or inability to make it to the office before 10 am. Additional symptoms include frequent coffee breaks, "working from home" approximately once a week, and excessive happy houring at approximately 4 pm.

Those infected with the disease often mistake it in the early stages for elation. They erroneously think, "This sure the heck beats 60-hour weeks in the salt mines!" However, as the weeks draw on, then the months, they see the truth. Seven-day work weeks start to seem like heaven on earth.

The truth is, the disease bears many similarities to depression. Let's face it--going to work and having nothing to do for endless hours is no fun, and anyone who has been in that position would agree that it's much worse than being super busy. What's worse, having nothing to do allows the mind to go wild. Suddenly, all you can think about is how long the firm will continue to sign your paycheck. You are terrified that the ax is going to fall, and you have no work activities to divert your mind from that sense of doom.

Having experienced this condition myself, I sadly don't have much advice as to how to deal with a slow legal market. I think what got me through the situation was simply knowing that I wasn't alone. Everyone I worked around was experiencing the slow down as well, and, as the saying goes, misery loves company, right? More importantly, even at the darkest hour, I think I fundamentally knew that I would find my way out of it. And, although it took longer than I would have wished, I did. You will, too. I'm not saying that you can avoid a layoff through sheer force of will. I wish you could, but you can't. I am certain, however, that whether you are laid off or stuck in your office worrying that you will be, the market will turn around and you will find work. That's really all I have for you, so now you can get back to the internet.