# Chapter 23 When the Work Is Not Enough

# The Sinister Stress of Boredom

A. Weinberg

1 University of Salford, Salford, Lancashire, UK

# Abstract

Boredom as a state and understimulation as a stressor are examined in the context of working, with consideration also given to the potential role played by these factors in evolutionary terms. It is suggested that the waste of mental capital engendered by understimulation inside and outside of work can have wider negative consequences—a high proportion of employees already report experiences of boredom. Links are drawn between work design and optimal levels of variety and arousal, both of which have implications for psychological functioning and mental health. These relations are located within discussion of the influential roles of attention, personality characteristics—including sensation-seeking—and brain-related factors, highlighting the interplay between internal and external variables which lead to the experience of boredom. Reference is made to a range of individual coping strategies—some deliberate and some instinctive—as well as much-needed social approaches to these widespread phenomena.