Feelings of boredom (like during a slow meeting or dull dinner party) have a sneaky way of settling into hard-to-shake resentment. The fix: Ask yourself, *How can I be of service here?* suggests Seppala. Pass a coworker a tissue, for example, or top off your fellow diner’s empty glass. “When you shift from thinking inwardly—about yourself—to thinking outwardly—about others—your mind-set shifts as well, to one of engaged compassion,” notes Seppala. While engagement zaps boredom, the good deeds trigger positive interaction that keeps grudging negativity from taking hold.

**PHOTO: FOTOLIA. TEXT: M. KETCHIFF**

The question that ends tension

Picture this: You wake up late, only to discover it’s pouring outside and your umbrella is, um, in the car. By the time you finally make your way through the gridlocked traffic to your morning appointment, there’s a black cloud parked over your (now frizzy) head. Sound familiar?

“Women are under an enormous amount of pressure, and when stress levels are high, small frustrations are more likely to trigger all-day anger, anxiety and irritability,” says Emma Seppala, Ph.D., associate director of Stanford University’s Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. But asking yourself a strategic question in the moment can stop this slide into unshakable crankiness, she assures. “Bringing yourself back to the present allows you to relax and respond in a calmer, healthier way.” Read on for the questions that will take your mood from stressed to serene—instantly!

**When boredom makes you restless**

**ASK HOW CAN I BE OF SERVICE?**

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