

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE



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5 Ways to Manage Summer Stress



Summer is often portrayed as carefree and relaxing, but for many people, it brings its own set of stressors. Changes in routine, packed schedules, family obligations, extreme heat and the pressure to “make the most” of the season can all contribute to feeling overwhelmed. However, with a few intentional strategies, summer stress can be managed.

To help you enjoy the season to the fullest and manage your mental well-being, the following five tips can help ease summertime stress:

1. **Acknowledge that summer can be stressful.** Give yourself permission to admit that summer isn’t automatically relaxing. Recognizing stress is the first step to managing it, rather than ignoring or minimizing how you feel.
2. **Protect your sleep.** Longer daylight hours and late-night activities can lead to sleep deprivation. Set a regular bedtime, limit evening screen time, and keep your bedroom cool and dark to support quality rest.
3. **Manage heat-related stress.** Hot weather can increase irritability and fatigue. Stay hydrated, wear lightweight clothing, take cooling breaks and avoid strenuous activity during peak heat hours.
4. **Watch spending to reduce financial pressure.** Summer costs can add up quickly. Create a simple budget for travel, activities and entertainment, and look for free or low-cost options like parks, libraries and community events.
5. **Limit social comparison.** Social media often highlights picture-perfect vacations and experiences. Remember that everyone’s summer looks different, and what you see online is not the full story.

Summer doesn’t have to be perfect to be meaningful. By recognizing common summer stressors and choosing practical, manageable coping strategies, you can create a season that feels more balanced, present and restorative on your own terms.

If you have concerns about your mental health or overall well-being, it’s important to seek help from a trained health care provider.

Protecting Mental Health Through Better Sleep in the Summer

Sleep and mental health are closely connected. Quality sleep helps regulate mood, manage stress and support emotional resilience, while poor sleep can worsen symptoms of anxiety, depression and irritability. When we don’t get enough rest, the brain struggles to process emotions and respond calmly to challenges.

Summer can make maintaining this balance harder. Longer daylight hours, warmer nights, travel and changing schedules can disrupt sleep routines, making it more difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep when mental well-being depends on consistent rest. As such, consider these tips for a better night’s sleep during the summer:

- **Keep a consistent sleep schedule.** Even with vacations, social events and later sunsets, try to go to bed and wake up within the same one-hour window each day. Consistency helps regulate your internal clock, which supports deeper sleep and steadier mood.
- **Manage light exposure in the evening.** Extended daylight can delay your body’s natural release of melatonin, the hormone that signals sleep. In the evening, dim indoor lights, limit screen use at least an hour before bed, and consider

blackout curtains or a sleep mask to create a darker sleep environment.

- **Stay cool at night.** Warm temperatures can interfere with deep, restorative sleep. Use fans, lightweight bedding, breathable pajamas and keep your bedroom as cool as possible. A cool room helps your body naturally transition into sleep.
- **Get morning sunlight.** Spending time in natural sunlight earlier in the day, such as a morning walk or having coffee outside, helps regulate circadian rhythms. This makes it easier to feel alert during the day and sleepy at night, improving both sleep quality and overall mood.

Sleep is a powerful form of mental health care, not an optional luxury. By adjusting habits to fit summer's unique challenges, you can protect your sleep and, in turn, support better mood, focus and emotional well-being all season long.

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