

Live Well,
Work Well



Combating Summertime Stressors



Summertime is often associated with sunny days, relaxation and vacations. However, it can also bring unique stressors that, if not managed, can impact an individual's well-being. From the pressure of planning vacations to the physical toll of extreme heat, summertime stressors can creep into your life. Understanding these stressors and how to combat them is essential for enjoying the season to its fullest.

This article highlights common summertime stressors and offers practical tips for managing them.

Common Summertime Stressors

While researchers continue to explore the causes of increased depression, anxiety and stress in the summer, various factors are at play during the warmer months. Consider the following potential stressors:

- **Extreme weather changes**—Summer's longer days, sunlight, and rising heat and humidity may contribute to seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Just as some people experience the winter blues, some may instead face summertime sadness. Aside from SAD, people may find staying cool physically and emotionally challenging when temperatures soar. As a result, they may find themselves feeling irritable, impatient and short-tempered.
- **Routine disruptions**—The summer season can change regular schedules or routines. For example, school breaks mean children are home, requiring parents and caregivers to adjust daily schedules.
- **Habit changes**—Longer daylight hours and the desire to make the most of the season can also lead to changes in sleep and activity patterns.
- **Vacation planning stress**—While vacations are meant to be relaxing, the planning process can be stressful. Coordinating schedules, booking travel and accommodations, and budgeting for expenses can create a significant mental load.
- **Social obligations**—Summertime often brings more social events, such as weddings, barbecues and family gatherings. While these events can be enjoyable, they also come with expectations and obligations that can feel overwhelming.
- **Body image concerns**—For those who live with body image concerns, summer clothing can increase feelings of anxiety and insecurity.
- **Financial limitations**—Summer activities, vacations and social events can strain finances. The desire to enjoy the season can lead to overspending, which causes financial stress.

Supporting Your Mental Health in the Summer

Due to high expectations of fun in the sun, the summer months can leave many feeling stressed, burnt out or overwhelmed. Try the following tips to support your well-being during the summer:

- **Identify your summertime triggers.** First, it's important to understand what triggers your anxious or depressive feelings to cope effectively. For example, triggers may be physically related to the weather or finances, as pressure and stress result from spending money on trips, experiences and child care or being unable to take time off.
- **Get outside.** Summer often makes it easier to get outside and soak up vitamin D, so aim to get outside for at least 30 minutes daily. Spending time in nature can help improve your mood by reducing stress, combating anxiety and depression, and enhancing cognitive function.

- **Stay physically active.** Exercise can help reduce stress and improve productivity, so prioritize movement during your day. You don't necessarily need to go to the gym; other ideas include walking, doing stretches or exercises at your workstation, or playing an active game with your family.
- **Maintain a healthy sleep schedule.** Long, hot summer days may make sleeping difficult, but it's critical to prioritize and regulate your sleep to improve your overall mood. Relaxation mobile apps may help you calm down at night and get some shut-eye.
- **Stick with a routine in general.** Establishing and following a consistent routine can help you feel more in control of your summer and motivate you. It can be helpful to write plans or memos to yourself in a planner. Scheduling apps or calendars can also help you stay on track, set reminders or easily adjust plans.
- **Use your vacation time.** Vacations can give you something to look forward to, naturally releasing dopamine to fight summertime blues. Vacations don't have to be expensive or last several days. A quick getaway, road trip or staycation can help boost your mood and recharge your mind.
- **Plan your day.** You may feel more overwhelmed if you don't have a plan for the coming days and weeks, but focus on just one day ahead. By having a plan and backup plan, you can feel more in control of the day and be ready for the unexpected, like the weather.
- **Don't compare yourself with others.** It's easy to get overwhelmed while scrolling social media and seeing what friends, families and influencers are doing during the summer. Try not to compare your day and activities with theirs, and keep any fear of missing out (or FOMO) at bay.
- **Be realistic.** It's important to control—and potentially lower—your expectations and be realistic about what you will be able to do during the summer. It's OK to embrace downtime and also schedule time for self-care or "me time."
- **Don't break the bank.** All the summer activities and vacations can quickly add up, increasing your financial stress. Don't feel like you or your family need to participate in activities daily; space them out. Also, put some thought into entertainment or activities that can be free or low-cost, and focus on being present or having shared experiences with your loved ones.
- **Socialize to stay connected.** If you're not traveling this summer or planning many activities, use your weekends or time off to socialize with friends and family. Connections can help you be more resilient to stress and fight off feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Taking care of yourself and helping others care for themselves can help you fight off overwhelming or uneasy thoughts and have an enjoyable summer season.

Summary

Summertime stressors are prevalent, but they can be managed effectively with the right strategies. It's easy to get overwhelmed or burnt out by various pressures and expectations, but understand it's common. The key to a relaxing summer is balance and self-care. By prioritizing your well-being, you can make the most of the season.

Contact a trained health care provider if you or a loved one needs support managing stress.

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