

Summertime Mental Health Tips

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By Extension Assistant Professor, Tasha Howard



Although the weather is heating up, the kids are out of school, and the sun is shining, summertime can still be hard on our mental health. Many people think that because there is more vitamin D, there are automatically less mental health issues, but that is not accurate. According to researchers there are many different reasons as to why summertime can bring on the blues, even though the sun is shining (Borges, 2019). Some of these reasons are lack of structure, loneliness, fear of missing out, and unrealistic expectations. If you find yourself feeling a little more anxious or depressed this summer there are some ways to combat that, here are just a few.

Combating Summertime Blues Tip #1: Evaluate your (and other's) expectations of what summer should look like. Social media seems to have influenced our expectations even more and made it harder and harder to be realistic about what we can do. A lot of the reason why summertime feels so hard is because we tend to build it up in our head (Borges, 2019). This can look like "during summer I will finally do BLANK" or "this will be the best summer ever." When we try to reconcile our expectations with reality, we can improve our mental health by accepting things as is..

Combating Summertime Blues Tip #2: Children are often the ones who struggle the most mentally during the summertime. This is due to the lack of structure which they are used to having. To help combat that, plan events like

play dates or sign them up for summer programs such as 4-H or sports. Even having them attend daycare can maintain somewhat of the structure they are used to.

Combating Summertime Blues Tip #3: Find ways to keep chilled. Although there is not a lot of research available on the subject, there have been some studies which show that higher and hotter temperatures can exacerbate mental health issues. This can be due to the change in sleeping patterns due to increased daylight, heat stress, and disruptions in biological systems (Whitley, 2021). Finding a way to keep cool during the summer and making sure you are taking a physical inventory, like checking your temperature, amount of sweat, swelling of body parts, and flushed skin, when you are going to be out in the heat for long periods of time can help keep you chill not only physically, but mentally as well.

Combating Summertime Blues Tip #4: Use vacations to your advantage! Science has shown that vacations give us something to look forward to and be excited about. This naturally releases dopamine and can help fight the summertime blues. Vacations do not always have to be long or expensive. Research supports that even a quick weekend getaway can have the same effect as having a week-long vacation (Whitley, 2021). That means you can easily take a few days here and there and re-charge and refresh your mind helping you make it through the summer.

Combating Summertime Blues Tip #5: Socialize to stay connected! This may come naturally to some and be less appealing to others. Being able to connect to a social network can help you avoid the loneliness cycle. Although it may be hard to reach out or put yourself in a new situation, making small talk, creating connection, and looking for opportunities to connect with others can really help.

Although summer does not normally get the rep for being the season of the blues, if you let it, it can have a negative effect on your mental health. Making sure you are taking care of yourself and helping others take care of themselves can help you fight off the summertime blues and have an enjoyable and mentally healthy summer season.

References

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