



Maintaining Balance during the Summer Months

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Daily routines can shift drastically over the summer months whether you are a student no longer needing to attend class, using up that extra vacation time, or finding yourself filling up your social calendar with additional activities or events. Depending on your situation, you may feel as if you are even busier now that summer has arrived, or perhaps you have too many unoccupied hours during the day. Either way, it can be hard to adjust to such abrupt changes to your daily routine. While taking some extra time off or committing yourself to more activities can be great, it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

It is not uncommon to feel the negative effects of these changes on your physical, mental, and emotional health when the balance is not quite right. Common issues that may arise include fatigue, sleep problems, increased stress, poor mood, and/or strained relationships. Maintaining structure and healthy self-care practices during the summer months will ensure that you will be feeling your best all summer long. In addition, it can help make the transition back to school or a more consistent work schedule much easier come fall.

Here are some tips to get started:

- **Examine your unstructured time.** If you notice yourself feeling bored, restless, or socially-isolated, you may need to consider adding structure to your day. Try making plans with friends, devoting time to a new or forgotten hobby, finding a summer job, or volunteering.
- **Go to bed and wake up at similar times each day.** It's tempting to stay up or sleep in extra late during the summer but our body and mind functions optimally when we get consistent and regular sleep. Try sticking to a sleep schedule in which you wake-up and go to bed at similar times each day.
- **Eat consistent and healthy meals and snacks.** Think about how your eating habits change over the summer. Do dinners get pushed-back until late in the evening? Do you tend to pick more unhealthy options or miss major food groups? Are you eating out of boredom or for other emotional reasons? If so, your physical and mental health may suffer. Planning and maintaining set meals and times can help.

- **Don't forget other health habits.** Some people tend to increase their alcohol consumption during the summer. You run the risk negatively influencing your physical, mental, or emotional health with increased use. Try to limit alcohol use to a healthy amount set by your doctor. In addition, make sure you are drinking enough water when the weather is hot.
- **Take time some time alone.** Summer road trips, weekends at the cabin, weddings, graduation parties, and family reunions are all great times to catch-up with family and friends. Remember that you also need time alone now and then to “recharge” your social batteries. Implement some solo activities throughout the week such as reading, going for run, doing yoga, or taking the dog for a walk. This will help keep your stress levels low so that you can make the most of the time you have with the important people in your life.

Lastly, remember to **have fun!** Adding structure and self-care is not about denying yourself of extra time for relaxation or fun, but it is important to recognize when the factors noted above may be impacting your health. Your mind, body, and emotional health will thank you for maintaining a positive balance!

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