

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

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Combating Summertime Stressors

Many people experience better mental health and mood during the summer due to longer days and sunlight. Yet the season is stressful for others; summertime stressors and extreme weather conditions may even worsen symptoms of seasonal affective disorder.

To cope effectively, it's first important to understand what triggers anxious or depressive feelings. For example, summertime triggers may be related to the weather—such as the heat, sun or humidity—or finances, as pressure and stress result from spending money on trips, experiences and child care or being unable to take time off.

Try these tips to support your summertime mental well-being:

- **Get outside.** Spending time in nature can help improve your mood by reducing stress, combating anxiety and depression, and enhancing cognitive function.
- **Stay active.** Exercise can help reduce stress, so prioritize daily movement.

- **Maintain a healthy sleep schedule.** Long, hot summer days may make sleeping difficult, but regulating your sleep is critical to improving your overall mood.
- **Stick with a routine.** Establishing and following a routine can help you feel more in control of your summer and motivate you.
- **Don't compare yourself with others.** It's easy to get overwhelmed while scrolling social media, so try not to compare your day and activities and keep the 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 are able to do during the summer.

It's easy to get overwhelmed or burned out in the summer by pressures and expectations, but understand that it's common. Contact a health care provider if you need help this summer.

The Influence of AI on Mental Health Care

Artificial intelligence (AI) in mental health is still relatively new but could become more prevalent in the future. Some people are turning to AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, for mental health support, but this behavior can be risky; the technology doesn't have the qualifications of a qualified mental health professional.

Here are the potential benefits of using AI for mental health care:

- Increased accessibility
- Boosted mental health literacy
- Preserved anonymity

While AI has great potential, its development isn't there quite yet, especially for mental health-related topics. It's important to understand that there are also pitfalls, including the following:

- False information
- Misinterpretation of information
- Ethical concerns (e.g., data privacy and bias)

Some AI platforms even include disclaimers that they shouldn't be used to diagnose serious conditions, provide instructions for curing conditions or manage life-threatening issues.

Takeaway

In today's digital world, it's easy to become overwhelmed when researching information. Accurate mental health advice and information requires using all available sources but understanding their limitations. For example, AI currently doesn't consider your lifestyle habits, medical history and other personal details when providing information.

Although generative AI and chatbots are not meant to replace professional health care, they can help you increase your mental health literacy and anonymously discuss concerns. However, AI is no replacement for traditional forms of therapy, such as talking to a certified professional. As such, contact a qualified medical provider for the most accurate, personalized information and guidance.