



EAP Newsletter

Issue 7
July 2022

Getting ready for summer; travel, holidays and keeping it all together

With longer, lighter, and warmer days, it feels like the summer is finally here. However, whilst the summer usually brings sunshine, smiles and often sandy hands, there can also be many days during that long six-week period that can feel hard, especially if you are a parent or carer juggling work and trying to occupy children too.

It's OK to feel nervous about the impending summer holidays. Whether it be stress regarding going away on holiday, anxiety about making the most of every day, or a nervousness about how you will juggle your job and the children, it's perfectly normal to feel those flutters of apprehension at the start of the break.

As always, the first step is just to take note of your worries and anxieties around this period. Only then can you begin to tackle them head on.

Travel and holiday preparation

Many of us may not have travelled for over two years due to COVID restrictions, and as such, may be feeling that little bit more anxious about getting ready to go away on holiday this year.

Whether you are traveling abroad or in the UK, prepping for holiday can be stressful. Here are some tips to ensure your upcoming trip is slightly easier on both you and the whole family.

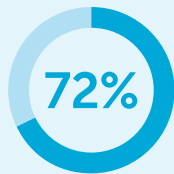
- **Book in advance:** Making your holiday plans and booking early gives you plenty of time to get all of your pre-travel errands done. It will also allow you to find the cheapest deals and shop around.
- **Put that out of office on:** For a stress-free trip, you should set clear boundaries between your work time and holiday time. Try to be well-organised at work in the weeks leading up to your trip so you can feel more comfortable doing a handover. Put your out of office on and ensure that all those
- **Plan for every eventuality:** Let's be honest, there are many things that can go wrong when going away that can just be simply out of our control. Being mindful of this, and indeed accepting that things can go wrong, can help you mentally plan how to deal with these stressors.
- **Give yourself ample time:** Rushing to the airport at the last minute will only cause you stress. Pack the day before and set off earlier than you think you should to account for traffic jams and long security queues.



If you are feeling stressed, you might wish to try and practice a relaxation technique. Meditating, breathing exercises, or other relaxation techniques are excellent ways to relieve stress and restore some balance to your life.

Juggling work and childcare

The long summer holidays and finding engaging activities for the kids to do has always been tricky for parents. In fact, a survey of parents conducted by Sphero before lockdown, found that a massive two-thirds of parents dreaded the summer holidays and admitted they had no idea how to keep their kids occupied during the break.



72% of the 2,000 parents surveyed, revealed how much of a struggle it is to keep their children occupied and away from screens and tablets.



One in three parents admitted that they wished their children would spend less time watching TV during the holidays.

If you are sitting there scratching your head thinking of ways to amuse the kids at home, here are our three tips that might just help.

- **Set a routine:** Almost all children do better with some form of structure and routine – in fact we all do. The key here is setting some form of routine and sticking to it. This means waking up at the same time every morning and going to bed at the same time at night. Just because it's the holidays, try to avoid the temptation of sleeping in or late-night sleepovers. In the same way, keep mealtimes regular too where possible. If we schedule our time, we're more likely to stick to doing the things we need to do and feel less guilty about doing the things we enjoy. Not only will your children do better with this routine, but you will thank yourself as well as you will be able to plan your working day or chores around it too.
- **Have an open and honest communication with your employer:** If you do need to work during the summer holidays – and let's face it – many parents will, it is important to speak to your employer about what you need to get your job done. The focus for you as a family is to create a work-home synergy that suits your individual needs, and this means negotiating this with your employer. The emphasis must be on both parties here to make this work. Taking the initiative to start an honest and open dialogue with your employer – one where you share your true reality – could help create a flexible working package for you that reduces daily

stress and anxiety. Ultimately, this will make you more productive throughout your working day too.

- **Practice acceptance:** Remember that as a parent, it's important for you to be pragmatic about what you can control and learn to accept you can only do your best. Try to recognise the additional input of hours needed from you as a parent during these summer weeks and turn your mind towards acceptance and compassion. This could greatly improve your ability to navigate this time. It will also make you a happier person, which no doubt your children will pick up on too.

Navigating the school summer holidays is never going to be simple for parents and ultimately there are always going to be days when you feel like you haven't quite got the balance right. But that is OK. By following these simple tips above, it should help you to feel a little more in control of the situation so that you can enjoy the time yourself and ensure that the summer break is a time to look back on fondly.

Kids feeling a little stressed too? Why not try this mindfulness practice with them?

Mindfulness is suitable for anyone, even children. In fact, there are some excellent books for children that make mindfulness more accessible. It is a great life skill to learn at an early age and can provide a well needed moment of calm for both children and their parents or carers. If you need an idea for a mindfulness technique to practice with your child, why not try this mindful drawing exercise?



Mindfulness includes awareness of what we're feeling, as well as the world around us. Young children sometimes have difficulty naming their feelings but drawing emotions can be a great way for a child to pay attention to what they are feeling and express it without using words. The key here is to try doing this exercise at different times – not only when your child is upset.

Try this today: **Start by sitting down together and ask them to close their eyes.**

Encourage them to think about how they are feeling at that moment. You might want to offer some words to give them some ideas. For instance, perhaps ask if they are feeling happy, sad, scared, angry, worried. Then ask them to draw how they feel. Make sure you role model the exercise too by drawing how you are feeling as well. If they name their emotion, you can write the word on their picture too. Try to let their imagination run wild on this one, encourage them to use any colours or medium they want without constraining them to using one bit of paper or one type of pencil.



Getting active

Exercise brings a variety of health benefits to you and your family, both physical and mental.



The official NHS advice is that adults should undertake **at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity** per week. This is often divided into 30 minutes on five or more days a week.



Children and young people, **aged 5 to 18**, should aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity a day across the week.

Moderate intensity means working hard enough to make you breathe more heavily than normal and become slightly warmer, but not so hard that you are unable to talk and exercise at the same time, or that you become exhausted.

Here's how getting active can help you and your family today



Healthier heart. Regular workouts lower your risk of heart disease, improve your blood cholesterol levels, and help to control, or even prevent, high blood pressure.



Strong bones and muscles. Your bones and muscles get stronger when you work out. It can also help ward off osteoporosis and protect your balance and coordination.



Reduced stress. Exercise calms your body and your brain. After exercising your levels of stress hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) drop.



Weight control. Whether you want to lose some inches around the waist, or just avoid putting on extra pounds, exercise is the key.



Better sleep. Get regular exercise will help you fall asleep faster and also sleep more soundly. The harder you exercise, the more likely you are to have a good night's sleep.



Better mood. When you work out, your body makes endorphins which are the "feel-good" chemicals in the brain.

Myth busting!



Myth:

If I have a physically demanding job then I don't need to work out outside of work.



Fact:

Studies have shown that manual work does not result in the same benefits as exercise outside of work. Often exercise is of a greater intensity with a variety of movements inside your control, which exerts a greater influence on your overall health. #HealthIsWealth

Injury prevention.

It's great to get more active, but you'll also need to be mindful of putting too much strain on your body. Here are 4 ways to prevent those 'oh so common' fitness injuries.

1

Warm up and cool down.

It is important to warm up before physical activity because research has shown that a heated muscle is less likely to be strained. Do some light walking or jogging before you start your exercise and then again afterward to help your muscles cool down slowly.

3

Take your time.

Don't push yourself too hard or too fast. Getting in shape or learning a new sport takes time. Gradually increase the time you spend exercising or the miles you run. Don't try and do a marathon from day one.

2

Increase flexibility.

Another important way to prevent injury is to increase your flexibility. This can be done by stretching before and after a workout. Remember it is best to stretch once the body is already warm.

4

Listen to your body.

Adjust your activities if your body is showing signs of too much stress. If you feel a niggle, rest it. If that niggle turns into an ongoing pain, take it seriously and get it seen by a professional.



5 healthy eating tips for you and your family.

1

Drink more water. Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of water per day to stay well hydrated. Try to drink one glass as soon as you wake up and one with each meal you have.

2

Try to eat 'whole' foods. The more refined and processed the foods you consume are, the more likely they will contain higher levels of sugar and salt.

3

Be prepared on the go. When working in the field it's easy to reach for unhealthy, convenience foods. Try to take fruits, nuts or seeds with you to maintain your energy levels

4

Eat more protein. Try to have a protein source in each of your meals. This will help to keep you feeling fuller for longer throughout the day.

5

Try the 80/20 rule. It's easy to slip from eating well long term. As a rule, try to eat well 80% of the time and allow yourself to enjoy the foods that may not be the best option 20% of the time.

And finally, our tip of the month; the one thing we ask you to do today if you do nothing else...

Learn to accept your emotions this summer: It is completely normal to experience a whole range of emotions, positive and negative during the summer months. It is all part of being a human being. Accepting emotions and situations, just like you accept the odd rainy day this summer holiday, is one of the best ways to start managing unhealthy avoidance practices. When you accept that an emotion is with you it gives you a chance to learn about it, to befriend it and familiarise yourself with how it makes you feel, making it easier to integrate it into your life. It may sound counter-intuitive but when you accept a negative emotion, it tends to tarnish its destructive power.

