

# 6 WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH THIS SUMMER

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So many of us count down the days until the warmth and relaxation of summer arrives. It's an exciting time filled with long sunny days, new adventures and a less formal routine. But for some, especially those who struggle with anxiety, the summer months can trigger feelings of being overwhelmed and losing control. A more flexible work schedule, an abundance of social activities and the expectation of being carefree can put a lot of pressure on a racing mind.

## 1) Get Moving

Exercise has long been known as a great way to defuse anxiety. Enjoying the warm weather, soaking up the sunshine and hitting the pavement is a winning combination to calm a racing mind. Get a pool membership, find a great bike trail, go for regular hikes or take part in an outdoor boot camp to get those endorphins pumping while you enjoy a healthy dose of vitamin D.

## 2) Set a Goal

Try and challenge yourself to train for a race or take on a new activity. Although daunting, completing it can fuel your sense of adventure, show you that you can overcome your fears and make you feel proud and accomplished. Don't avoid challenges this summer. Though it can be scary at first, that feeling of stepping outside your comfort zone is ultimately exhilarating.

## 3) Plan a Getaway

A change of scenery has always been a great way for me to unwind and curb anxious thoughts. Being in a new environment, embarking on adventures and reconnecting with my husband allow me to leave my daily routine and stresses behind and feel refreshed and recharged. Book a getaway with your favorite travel partner, even if it's just a staycation. An escape from the hustle and bustle of your daily grind can do you a world of good.

## 4) Get Outside

Exposure to sunlight and fresh air has long been known to increase serotonin levels and reduce anxiety. Being outside promotes a sense of calm and well-being. This summer take up a new outdoor hobby, such as gardening. It will force you to spend time outdoors and give you a sense of accomplishment as you watch the seeds of your labor take root.

## **5) Practice Mindfulness and Meditation**

The art of mindfulness is simply being in the here and now. Take a few minutes every day to focus on the sights and sounds of what's happening around you. Paying attention to the music of nature, smelling freshly cut grass and feeling the heat of the sun on your face will help ground you and put a stop to ruminating thoughts.

## **6) Make Good Use of Vacation Time**

We often use vacation time as a way to accomplish unfinished tasks, attend long overdue appointments and get things done around the house. This summer use some of your holidays for self-care. Pick up a book you've been meaning to read, hang out by the pool or meet an old friend for lunch. Adding some fun and relaxation to your summer can help you reboot and reduce stress.

*Source: <https://www.besthealthmag.ca/best-looks/mental-health-in-the-summer/>*