

Supporting your Young Person over the Summer Break

The summer holidays often mean lots of free time without any routine. Furthermore, not seeing friends as often may mean some young people feel more isolated and lack motivation for other activities. If you feel your young person may struggle with their mental health over the summer, here are some ways you can support them.

Prioritising Wellbeing

Is your teenager often irritable? Stressed? 'Hangry'? Low?

Look at their **eating habits** – Are they eating regularly enough (e.g. having 3 balanced meals and 2 snacks per day)? Are they only eating food high in sugar/highly processed foods? Are they drinking a lot of caffeine (including energy drinks)? These things will lead to drastic fluctuations in their blood sugar, affecting mood and energy levels.



Look at their **sleep pattern** – Are they staying up til early hours of the morning? Do they have access to screens before bedtime? Do they struggle to wake up at a reasonable time? Making small changes to improve their sleeping behaviours will help lift their mood and motivation. Even though they don't have school during the holidays, try and encourage them to have some routine around getting ready for bed and waking up.

Look at their **physical activity levels** – Are they getting out of the house regularly enough? If they are not using up energy by exercising, they will struggle to feel tired leading to poor sleep. Furthermore, physical activity can boost mood and lower anxiety, which is why we encourage you to ensure your young person keeps active and does something physical that they enjoy every day.



Positive Encouragement

Sometimes if we are worried about our teen's mental health, we may try to avoid placing extra demands on them, which can be useful to avoid conflict.

However, we want to make sure they are doing plenty of **healthy behaviours**, and not simply avoiding all difficult situations, tasks or feelings. One way to increase these healthier behaviours is through **positive encouragement and praise**.

Key tips for staying positive:

Do:

- Look for the positive and praise this at every opportunity - “Thanks for helping out with XYZ. Well done for being responsible”
- Recognize the effort it takes for your teenager to do even small things when they are not feeling their best – “I can see that was hard for you. I know you can do it!”
- Use verbal and non-verbal (hugs, smiles) ways of showing them you’re pleased – “I’m really proud of you”
- Be inventive in your positivity: send a text, leave a post-it, give them a funny card or picture.
- Seek support from others to help *you* stay positive and calm.
- Work with your young person to find solutions.



Don't:

- Assume your teenager no longer needs you to help them!

It's all about balance

All humans need these 3 things to get that “feel good factor” from life and boost our mood:

1. A sense of **ACHIEVEMENT** – that we have been able to do something that we thought would be difficult, or something we have been putting off.
2. A sense of **CONNECTEDNESS TO OTHERS** – that we feel close to others, can relate to others and enjoy others’ company.
3. A sense of **ENJOYMENT** – that we have enjoyed or gained pleasure from something, that we have had fun.

Getting a balance between all 3 of these is key to keeping mentally healthy.

Daily Balance Planner:

Aim for your young person to do one of each type of activity every day (at least 1 achievement, 1 enjoyable, 1 connected to others).

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
EXAMPLE	Walk the dog with a friend (connectedness)	Play video games (enjoyment)	Help cook and do the washing up (achievement)
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

For further support:

Free Summer Workshops – 3rd and 24th August

Covering: **Relationships, Resilience & Relaxation**

For **young people** in years 7-13. (Mornings Yr7-9, and Afternoons Yr10-13)

To reserve your child a place, please contact s.mcguinness@mnessexmind.org

Places are limited, so please get in touch ASAP if interested.

Parent Workshop – Supporting your Child struggling with Low Mood

Get in touch if you would like to attend a Free Workshop for Parents who want to support their child struggling with Low Mood, Depression or Low Motivation. Please contact warms@mnessexmind.org to register interest in attending one of these workshops.

Other support:

Family Lives – offer support for parents through online chat, helpline or email

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

Young Minds Parent Helpline: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>