

Summertime Surviving and Thriving



THE ENDLESS DAYS OF SUMMER CAN BE FUN AND FREEING, BUT CAN ALSO BE DIFFICULT FOR MANY...

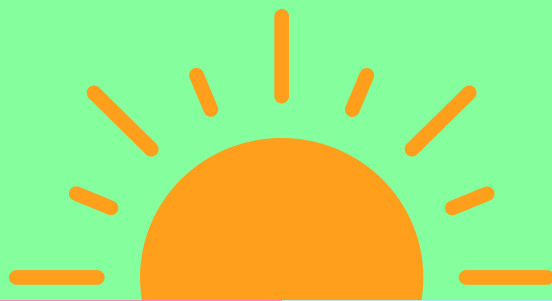
Summer can be isolating and difficult, so it's important that we stay aware of our mental health

- Be kind to yourself, you're allowed to struggle. Even if your feelings don't "match" with what's going on around you, let yourself experience your feelings.
- Everyone will have a different holiday experience, so try not to compare yours to someone else's highlights. Jealousy and disappointment are tricky to manage, but remembering everyone is different and has different experiences might help.

The #PerfectSummer doesn't exist! Someone's highlight reel will be just that- posed snippets rather than the whole experience.

It might seem like the whole world and their family are actively doing something for the holiday, but it's okay to take time out for yourself. Whether you go away, or stay at home- there is no wrong way to spend a summer break.





Sticking to routine

Something that can help is keeping to your normal routine over the holiday period. Sticking to bedtimes, eating schedules and self-care routines can allow you to feel more in control.

Staying prepared

Before the holidays begin, taking time to plan ahead can help relieve some anxiety. Write reminders of what helps you cope and keep that with you. Even if you don't end up needing it, sometimes just knowing you have that is enough. Knowing what services are available can help too, we've listed some at the back of this booklet for you.

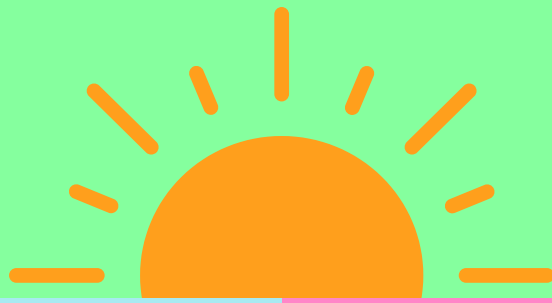
Taking time out

Stepping away to feel calm or manage your feelings is a good way to make things less overwhelming. If you can't take time out, think about something you can do afterwards (eg. I can't step away now, but later I could lay in bed and watch Netflix). It'll help to have something to look forward to, that's just for you.

Have a break from work/ stresses

If you have homework/studying to do over the holidays, it's important you relax too!

SOME THINGS THAT MIGHT HELP



Staying hydrated

During the summer many of us overheat. Staying hydrated not only helps keep us cool, but drinking cold liquids can be very grounding.

Many medications have side effects of dehydrating you as well, which makes it doubly important!

Remember, if you're already thirsty- you're already de-hydrated :(

Do what makes you happy~

It's your summer!

There's no right or wrong way to spend it, so just do what brings you joy!

Use SPF on scars

SPF is important for your whole body, but particularly for scars.

Scar tissue is more delicate, can burn quicker than normal skin, and you may not even feel it happening!

Beat the Heat

Some of our bodies are better at handling heat than others. Diverse Neurotypes (e.g. those with Autism, ADHD, etc) seem to struggle to regulate high temperatures, so staying cool is extra important! Try layering with a damp t-shirt/towel, putting a bowl of ice in front of a fan to create a cool breeze, and keep curtains/doors closed during the day!

SOME THINGS THAT MIGHT HELP

Emotions and How to Cope With Them

The holidays can kick up some strong feelings in us; loneliness, sadness, jealousy, anxiety, etc.

And that's perfectly fine, it's all about how you manage these feelings so they don't take over.

- Remember to communicate how you're feeling with those around you, we all have feelings. It may be tricky to speak them, so writing them down is a good way to get them out. But we should never bottle up how we are feeling.

Never feel bad for having negative feelings, there is nothing wrong with feeling them, they just don't make us feel great.

If you can identify the emotion(s) you are feeling, it becomes easier to decide how to tackle some of the more negative emotions.

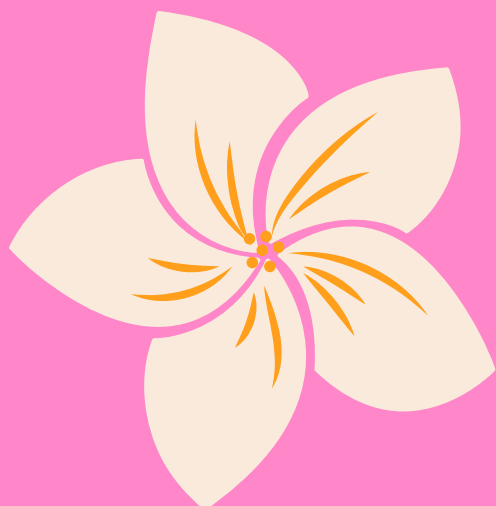
- One way you can do this is; if you are feeling a negative emotion, doing the opposite. For example if you are feeling sad, you might be tempted to listen to sad music, instead put something funny on. It sounds silly, but it can help balance out feelings so they don't consume us.

CAMHSTalk Podcast

We made a podcast recently which may help dealing with certain aspects of summertime shame:

- Episode 42: Talking about self harm and scars

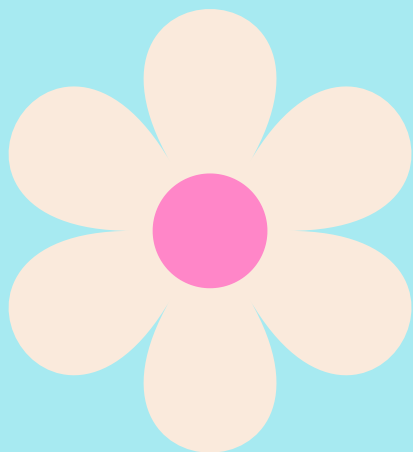
Available on all podcast platforms



Feeling Lonely

You may feel lonely over the holidays because you miss your friends or have memories of previous negative experiences. Or maybe you're away from home. There are a loads of reasons you may feel lonely, but the main thing to remember is that you are not alone. It's important you don't keep it to yourself, telling a trusted adult how you feel will let them understand and also help them support you better. Reach out to a friend, ask how their holiday is going. Play games together or FaceTime. If there is a relative you wanted to see but can't, video call them! We know it might not be the same as seeing them in person, but a chat might help a little.

**YOU ARE
NOT ALONE**



Grief

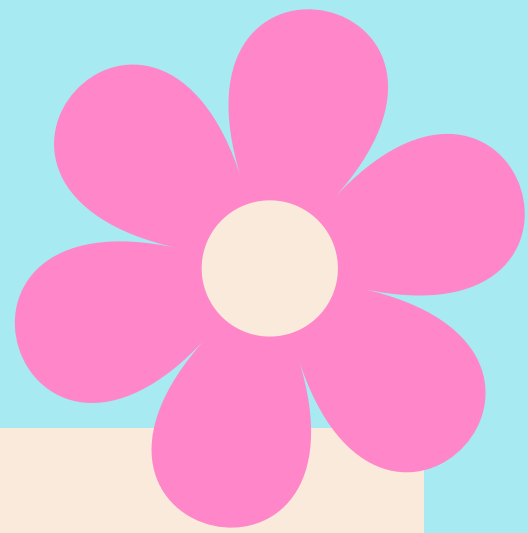
When you lose someone close to you, it can be difficult for a long time. Summertime is stereotypically happy, which can make having tough feelings or memories difficult.

It's hard, and that's okay. Surround yourself with people if you can, so you can be there for one another. It's okay to miss them and be sad. It's okay to have time to yourself, but isolating yourself away from friends for a long time can make things more difficult- it's okay to find happiness even during tough times like this. Being happy isn't a betrayal, and it's important to have people around you that can make you smile.

Finding little ways to remember those we lose can be really therapeutic, like going for walks in their favourite places, or planting flowers in their honour. Some people prefer to have gatherings of people close to them, and some people prefer to process things on their own.

Try sharing positive memories with people close to you, and remember the good times you shared together when things become difficult.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Family Struggles

Sometimes being at home can be an issue and, although it may feel out of your control, there are things you can do to manage. You may have to see other relatives during the summer who you may not like or get along with.

Remembering that the holidays are only temporary can be helpful. Summertime doesn't last forever and neither will these feelings, even if it doesn't seem that way at the time.

You don't have to justify yourself. People may ask questions you aren't comfortable answering and that can put pressure on you. It could help to try and explain these feelings to the people around you and tell them what they could do to help you. But understanding that not everyone may understand can help too. This can be frustrating and something you feel like you need to justify. You don't; your feelings and your struggles are just as valid, even if not everyone understands.

It is not your job to try and convince people, or base how you look after yourself on their reactions. Prioritising you and your wellbeing is the most important thing.

Not being together

Not everyone spends the summer together and that's OK!

If your parents are separated there may be pressure about who you spend the holiday with. You are allowed to make that choice, and it's not your job to keep everyone happy. You deserve to do what is best for you and what makes you most happy and safe.

You may not be seeing your friends or family for a number of reasons, but it's super important to stay connected when you can, reach out to someone you trust who can support you.

If you don't feel safe at home, please reach out and get support.

We've listed some support services at the back of this booklet

FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Missing Friends

Some friends might go away for the whole summer with families, or maybe you and your family is away visiting relatives out the country. Either way, when you can't see your friends for a while it can be difficult.

Going from seeing each other nearly every day, to not being able to be together for weeks on end can be difficult, especially if you keep seeing updates on social media of what a great time your friends are having.

Jealousy and envy, when combined with loneliness can be so overwhelming. It can make seeing that person again difficult; you might not even want to see them if you feel unwanted or not-missed over the holidays- but remember:

We are all making the best of our situations.

We are trying to enjoy the situations we have- we all miss people, social media only shows the highlights, not the lowlights.

We all have both highs and lows.



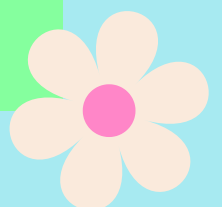
Sibling Issues

Long summer days with nothing to do and stuck inside a house with your siblings might seem like the set up to a horror movie for some.

When you don't get on with your siblings, everything can seem difficult, and somehow everything can turn into an argument.

Ways to avoid this might include putting literal space between you and your siblings, trying to keep to separate spaces, maybe with an agreement on communal areas.

Joining forces and cooperating on a joint hobby or activity may not be the worst thing in the world, and you might end up with some more joint respect and understanding of each other.



Take time for yourself. Talk to people that understand. You'll be okay.

Eating

If you have an eating disorder or struggle with food, the summer can be really tough. There's a huge focus on food around this time of year, and lots of diet talk too. This can be really overwhelming and triggering.

We have some tips on things that may help:

- Plan as much as you can in terms of meals/snacks but activities too. This can be helpful to do with someone you trust so they can support you. I on a meal plan, it's important to follow guidance from your team too
- Have some distractions planned after dinner, maybe help with the washing/clearing up; play some board games, do something arty or play a video game
- Unhelpful conversations may come up around how much food people are eating, diet talk or comments on people's bodies. These can be really difficult to manage. If you're comfortable doing so, maybe ask someone you trust to let others know to avoid these topics - or get them to help steer the conversations away
- It's important you look after yourself, so if you need some time out or a sleep that's okay

CAMHSTalk Podcast

We made a podcast back in 2020 which may be helpful

- Episode 19: Eating Disorders - How to manage Christmas (and other festivities with food

Available on all podcast platforms

LGBTQ+

Some people find themselves having to go back into the closet or hide who they are over the summer. There may be family coming over who aren't accepting or you may not be out at home at all.

While this isn't ideal, there are multiple reasons you may feel the need to do this.

There are a few things that can be helpful to remember:

- No one can tell you who you are - you are the only person that gets to label yourself.
- You know who you are, and that person is amazing. No matter what other people say, remembering how great you are is so important. Be kind to yourself, the holidays can be hard!
- Your identity is still valid and important.

Being addressed with the wrong pronouns or name can very uncomfortable. Getting cards/gifts aimed at the wrong gender can be really hard.

Remind yourself this is only temporary, you know who you are. Doing things that can bring you gender euphoria can help balance out the dysphoria.

STOP, TAKE A STEP BACK, OBSERVE, PROCEED MINDFULLY.

A really good way to regulate (control) our emotions (feelings) is to try and pause before we react to things, or STOP

Stop, Take a step back, Observe, Proceed mindfully.

Stop- Don't react. Don't move a muscle. Freezing for a moment helps prevent you from doing what your emotions want you to do (which is to act without thinking). Stay in control. Remember, you are in charge of your emotions. Name the emotion – acknowledge its presence.

Take a step back- When you are faced with a tricky situation, it may be hard to think about how to deal with it on the spot. Give yourself some time to calm down and think. Take a step back from the situation.

Observe- To make effective choices, it is important NOT to jump to conclusions. Instead, gather the relevant facts so you can understand what is going on and what options are available. Facts, not assumptions.

Proceed mindfully- Ask yourself "what choice will make this situation better or worse", "what do I want from this situation" Stay calm and in control, and once you have had time to think you will be better prepared to deal with the situation effectively. Remember your brain needs time to think all of this through.

Colouring ~



Mental Health Support

Reflect - Text support

- Just text 'Reflect' to 85258
- <https://giveusashout.org/>

Childline

- 1-2-2 webchat
 - Helpline 24/7: 0800 1111
 - Message boards
 - Email support within 24hrs
 - Their website also has lots of information and support
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Samaritans

- Helpline 24/7: 116 123
- <https://www.samaritans.org/>

LGBTQ+

Switchboard LGBT+ -

- Online webchat
 - Helpline 0300 330 0630 (10am-10pm)
- <https://switchboard.lgbt/>

Mermaids -

- Helpline: 0808 8010 400 (9am-9pm Mon-Fri)
 - Webchat (9am-9pm Mon-Fri)
 - Online forums
- <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/>

Mind have a great list of support here, too:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtiq-mental-health/useful-contacts/>

If you are in crisis, contact NHS 111 and select option 2.

FURTHER SUPPORT

It's important to reach out for support when you're struggling. Most services will be running regular hours over the summer- help is out there!

CAMHS Clinic Opening Hours:

Our CAMHS Clinics across Bedfordshire and Luton will be open all summer, between 9am-5pm.

Crisis Team Opening Hours:

The Crisis team in Luton and Dunstable Hospital A&E is open between 9am-9pm weekdays and 9am- 2pm weekends.

Young Person Sanctuary Opening Hours:

The Young Person's Sanctuary is a drop in-service in Luton, Bedford and Leighton Buzzard which is open all week from 4pm -10pm.

Eating Disorders

BEAT - Eating Disorders

- Helpline: 080881 0677 9am - midnight Mon-Fri and 4pm - Midnight on weekends
 - One-to-one webchat
- <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

Mind have a great list of support here, too:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/eating-problems/useful-contacts/>