

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE



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Coping With Summer-onset Seasonal Affective Disorder



Summer is often linked to fun and sunshine, but it can trigger reverse seasonal affective disorder (SAD) for some. This lesser-known condition, driven by heat, routine changes and social pressure, can disrupt mood and energy, often causing insomnia and reduced appetite. It can seriously impact daily life and shouldn't be dismissed as "summer blues."

While reverse SAD can be challenging, the following strategies can help manage symptoms of the condition:

- **Acknowledge the condition.** Understanding SAD and accepting that it can occur during summer can help reduce the stigma around getting help.
- **Stay cool.** Keeping your living and working spaces cool or taking cold baths can help reduce discomfort associated with warm temperatures and humidity.
- **Maintain a regular sleep schedule.** Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day can help regulate your body's internal clock.
- **Stay hydrated.** Dehydration can exacerbate feelings of lethargy and depression, so it's essential to drink plenty of water.
- **Exercise regularly.** Going outside for a daily walk and engaging in other physical activities can help boost your mood and energy levels.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** A diet abundant in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains can also help relieve symptoms.

Reverse SAD is a legitimate and often overlooked condition that can significantly impact one's quality of life during the summer. Fortunately, with the right strategies, it's possible to manage its symptoms and improve overall well-being.

Talk to a healthcare provider if you're experiencing symptoms of reverse SAD. Additionally, if you're concerned about your mental health, talk to your doctor or a licensed mental health professional, or contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).

Relieving Anxiety With Fidget Toys

In today's fast-paced world, anxiety has become increasingly common, especially among younger generations. One simple yet effective coping mechanism gaining popularity is the use of fidget toys. These small, handheld objects, such as stress balls, spinners or textured cubes, offer more than just entertainment; they can play a meaningful role in managing anxiety symptoms.

Fidget toys work by providing sensory stimulation that helps redirect nervous energy. When someone feels anxious, their mind may race, and their body may become tense. Engaging with a fidget toy gives the hands something repetitive and calming to do, which can make it easier to refocus attention. This sensory distraction helps break cycles of worry and supports a more grounded state of mind.

Research and professional practice support the use of these tools. Occupational therapists often recommend fidget toys for people with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder and anxiety-related conditions. These tools can support sensory processing and promote emotional regulation by providing predictable, soothing input. Over time, this can help individuals feel more in control of their reactions and better equipped to manage stress.

In particular, Generation Z (people born from 1997 to 2012) has embraced fidget toys as part of their wellness routines. Whether used during study sessions, work breaks or moments of overwhelm, these tools can help calm the nervous system and enhance concentration. Their portability and discreet design make them easy to incorporate into daily life.

While fidget toys are not a cure for anxiety, they can serve as a helpful complement to other coping strategies, such as deep breathing, mindfulness or therapy. Using them during the workday, whether in meetings, while answering emails or tackling focused tasks, can provide a subtle way to manage stress and stay engaged. Ultimately, fidget toys offer a simple, accessible way to channel restless energy into calm, productive focus, both at home and on the job.

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