

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE



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The Heat's Impact on Mental Health

As summer temperatures climb, most people think first about physical risks like dehydration or heatstroke. However, extreme heat can also take a real toll on mental health. Research has linked hot weather to increased irritability, anxiety and fatigue, as well as higher rates of aggression and even psychiatric hospitalizations. Heat can disrupt sleep, drain energy and put extra strain on the nervous system, all of which can worsen mood and make it harder to cope with everyday stress. People with existing mental health conditions, older adults and those without access to air conditioning are especially vulnerable.

Understanding this connection is the first step toward protecting yourself and those around you as temperatures rise. In addition, the following tips can help protect your mental health in the heat:

- **Prioritize sleep.** Hot nights can make quality rest harder to come by. Keep your bedroom cool with fans, blackout curtains or a portable air conditioner.
- **Stay hydrated.** Even mild dehydration can affect concentration and mood, so drink water consistently throughout the day, not just when you feel thirsty.
- **Take breaks from the heat.** Spend part of your day in spaces like libraries, malls or community cooling centers if your home lacks air conditioning.
- **Stay connected.** Check in on friends, family and neighbors, especially those who are elderly or isolated. Social support helps buffer the emotional effects of heat.
- **Adjust your schedule.** Schedule demanding tasks or exercise for cooler parts of the day, like early morning or evening, to reduce physical and mental strain.
- **Recognize the signs.** Irritability, concentration issues and unusual fatigue can be early signs that heat is affecting you. Give yourself permission to slow down and cool off.

It's easy to focus on the physical dangers of extreme heat, but it's just as important to recognize its effect on your mental health. Making small, manageable changes to your routine can really help you feel better when temperatures rise.

6 Tips to Reduce Overthinking

Overthinking is something almost everyone experiences, replaying conversations, worrying about decisions or imagining worst-case scenarios on a loop. While it's natural to reflect on problems, chronic overthinking can drain your energy, fuel anxiety and make it harder to actually solve the issues you're focused on. Instead of leading to clarity, it often traps people in cycles of doubt and rumination.

The good news is that overthinking is a habit, and like any habit, it can be reshaped with the right strategies and a bit of practice. Consider these six tips to reduce overthinking:

- **Notice when it's happening.** Awareness is the first step. When you catch yourself spiraling, simply saying to yourself, "I'm overthinking this", can interrupt the cycle.
- **Set a time limit.** Give yourself a specific window (e.g., ten minutes) to think through a problem. When time is up, consciously shift your attention elsewhere.
- **Challenge the thought.** Ask yourself if the worry is based on facts or assumptions. Often, overthinking involves jumping to conclusions rather than working from evidence.

- **Focus on what you can control.** Redirect energy toward actionable steps instead of hypothetical outcomes you can't influence.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Grounding techniques, like focusing on your breath or naming five things you can see, help anchor you in the present moment rather than the past or future.
- **Talk it out.** Sharing your thoughts with someone you trust can offer perspective and stop ideas from looping endlessly in your own mind.

Overthinking often feels productive, but it rarely leads anywhere new. By building small habits that interrupt the cycle, you can free up mental space for clearer thinking, better decisions and a calmer mind overall.

Contact a mental health professional for additional guidance or information.

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