

Beat the Summer Heat – and Keep Anxiety at Bay

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Moms everywhere agree – the summer can bring with it added stress. But, it's not just the increase in playdates that are adding anxiety. The summer sun can leave us feeling more on edge.

Heat increases feelings of angst and agitation, which is the last thing parents already busily commuting to and from sports, events, and other activities need. We're being counted on to get the family from point A to point B, but sometimes, we really just need to make a point to rest and recoup.

So, how can we continue to conserve energy and keep calm during warm weather days? Part of the reason anxiety flares is because it's easy to get dehydrated when it's hot. Sitting for lengthy periods of time in the bleachers, spending all day at the beach, or hosting a park playdate when temperatures soar means extra H₂O is needed.

Just because it's summer doesn't mean we need to be outside *all the time*, either. When it's over 90 degrees, the best way to combat discomfort is to stay indoors. If the kids are insisting on heading out, make sure to dress in comfort clothing and lather with sunscreen. Choosing an option that provides temporary shelter should the heat get too unbearable is ideal, so you can retreat for a while if needed.

"I get extremely anxious when I'm overheating, which causes me to overheat even more, making me more anxious," says mom, Nicole Files. "Sometimes I just go sit inside with the A/C on, in a quiet place if I'm at an outdoor event where I'm in the heat, like a BBQ." She added, "I keep a smaller fan handy at home. If I'm feeling it, I will blast it on me until I'm cool again, and the hum of the fan also helps the anxiety some."

If you've been centering your workout routine on outdoor exercises, make sure you have a back-up plan whenever the weather won't cooperate. Exercise lowers anxiety levels, so you shouldn't skip it just because you'll sweat too much outside. Make sure you are eating right and getting an adequate amount of sleep each night, too. Don't fall into the trap of a summer sleep schedule, staying up too late and feeling depleted the following day.

Of course, anxiety can attack at any point throughout the year – we are moms, after all. The role comes with a lot of rewards...and a lot of responsibility. Not everyone is adversely affected by heat, although it's a common trigger for many.

"My anxiety is at my lowest in the summer because I can get outside and enjoy the weather and spend time with my family," said mom, Heather Curtis. "During the winter I stress more – over snow removal with my job, stress more over the inability to go anywhere because of the bad weather. Add that to my kids being in school and having less time with them, and the stress of constant schoolwork."

If an intensely hot day without a breeze is a breeze for you, anyway, enjoy! For those who need to escape for a few, though, make sure to stay mindful of how you're feeling and have a plan in place. Chances are you're crafty enough to cook something up without anyone even noticing.