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A Summer that Strengthens Parents and Children

Practical steps for the Mental Well-Being of the Whole Family

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Summer, more than any other season, offers a unique opportunity for inner renewal, meaningful connection, and the strengthening of mental resilience—for both parents and children. The slower pace, the distance from everyday obligations, and the opportunity for shared experiences create the ideal setting for forming deeper family bonds and fostering genuine communication.

Beyond being a time of rest, summer is also an invitation to care for our mental health—not through complicated practices, but through simplicity and meaningful presence. It is a season that allows us to slow down, observe ourselves and those around us, and rediscover the beauty of the natural world.

We begin to hear what we may have tuned out during the busy winter months: our needs, our emotions, our true desires. Mental health is not an abstract concept; it is cultivated through small, everyday acts of balance and connection. Summer's natural rhythm can offer the space we need to realign with ourselves and reconnect with the people we love.

A Gentle Routine: Less of a Schedule, More of a Rhythm

Children thrive when they know what to expect. A relaxed but predictable daily flow—breakfast together, some time to play, a moment to rest—can help regulate their emotions and behavior.

This is especially important for children with autism, ADHD, or anxiety, who often struggle with transitions. Keeping regular times for sleeping, eating, outings, and resting can support their emotional balance. A simple visual schedule (using pictures, colors, or symbols) can offer relief to the entire family—and help reduce outbursts or meltdowns.

If you're planning an outing, trip, or visit, prepare your child in advance: explain where you're going, what to expect, when and how it will happen. Show them photos. Predictability lowers anxiety and builds trust and cooperation.

Of course, summer doesn't look the same for every family. For some, it's a time of closeness and shared joy. For others, it brings new challenges. The absence of school, the change in routine, and increased social expectations can intensify stress—not just for children, but for parents too. Some families must navigate their children's tension, anxiety attacks, outbursts, or fatigue at a time when everyone is "supposed" to be relaxing. For some children, summer doesn't feel like a break, it feels like a disruption. This isn't a failure; it's simply the truth.

And for the parents of these children, summer isn't just a vacation. It's a time when everyday life asks for more energy, more patience, and more emotional endurance.

But even in these moments -especially in these moments- small acts of connection, stability, and empathy can make a difference. Not just for the children, but for the whole family.

Gradual exposure: Helping your child feel comfortable with something new

When a child feels anxious about a new experience, either because they are afraid of being separated from their parent or because they are worried that they will be exposed, fail, or not be accepted, there is no need to rush to leave them alone. Instead, what often helps most is gentle, gradual exposure and familiarization, at their own pace. For example, a child may find it difficult to go to a group activity or camp.

Your presence at the beginning (either at the activity or at the entrance to the group) and your reassuring presence throughout the activity margin, either within the framework), can act as a bridge. The first time, you may need to stay with them. The second time, stay close but a little further back. Gradually, they will gain the confidence that they can do it on their own. This kind of support is not overprotection but gradual empowerment. At the same time, it may be useful to have a brief, discreet conversation with those who will be responsible for him in his new environment (teachers, activity leaders activity leaders) so that there is a common understanding of their needs. After all, the goal is not to avoid stress, but to help the child overcome it at their own pace and with a sense of security.



Online or offline, you choose how you want to spend your summer!

The modern way of life keeps us constantly between two worlds, the online and offline worlds. Summer offers the ideal opportunity to make a conscious decision. Where do we want to focus our attention? The simple act of putting our cell phones aside for a few hours a day can allow us to truly experience important moments, whether it's a walk on the beach, playing with our children, or chatting with friends. How we spend our summer is our choice! And that choice is powerful!

Digital Detox for the Whole Family: Is It Possible?

Digital detox does not necessarily mean completely disconnecting from screens, but rather redefining our relationship with them. For children in particular, it is an opportunity to rediscover their imagination, creativity, and real play. For parents, it is a challenge to set an example by limiting their own use of devices and creating spaces and opportunities for their children to engage in activities that are more meaningful and fulfilling "offline" moments. For example, establishing a family password for daily "break" from screens before dinner or one day a week without any digital media can have unexpected positive effects on everyone's mood and communication.

The value of doing nothing! Because mental rest is an activity!

Having learned to measure the day by how much we "got done," doing nothing often seems like a waste of time. However, true rest—both physical and mental—comes when we allow ourselves not to have to do anything. This time, without any specific goal or schedule, is not wasted. In fact, it can be deeply therapeutic.

Children, by nature, have the ability to lose track of time when they play. Adults need to allow themselves to be re-taught this skill. Summer offers a chance to make room for this kind of "non-activity" and to remember that rest is also a form of care.

Free time and activities that build self-confidence

Summer vacations are full of opportunities for activities that, although simple, boost children's self-confidence. Learning to swim independently, participating in team activities, or creating something with their hands are all experiences that give them a sense of competence and personal success.

Free time—when not overly directed by adults—gives children the space to experiment, make mistakes, and try again. Parents, by observing, supporting, and communicating without interfering too much, can play a key role in building this inner security. Every success, no matter how small, contributes to a child's inner strength.

The importance of authenticity and communication in relationships with children

Away from daily “musts,” we can speak with our children authentically, listen without rushing, and cultivate a sense of security grounded in honesty and connection.

When parents talk openly about their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, children learn to do the same. These moments foster a relationship of trust — the most stable foundation for mental resilience.

Strategies for supporting children with developmental difficulties

Maintain a gentle daily routine

Consistent bedtimes, mealtimes, and rest periods help promote a sense of internal stability.

Explain what to expect

Let your child know in advance where you’re going, when, and with whom. Being prepared reduces anxiety and increases cooperation.

Choose activities your child enjoys and feels comfortable with

Avoid overstimulation. Opt for places where they feel safe. Select activities based on their interests — that’s where their strengths lie.

Reward consistently, without pressure

A simple reward system (stickers, points, or choosing an activity) reinforces desired behaviors without adding stress.

Create or activate your support network

Inform friends or relatives about your child’s needs. Share responsibilities and ask for help when needed.

Listen to their feelings without correcting or invalidating them

Don’t ignore their anxiety or anger. Give them space to express themselves:

“Is there anything that worries you about the trip? What would help you feel more comfortable when we go?”

This helps children recognize and name their emotions while giving you a chance to find solutions — without pressure.

Protect your own resilience

Constant vigilance isn’t helpful — and it’s exhausting. Give yourself short breaks to recharge. This isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity.

Summer isn't just a time for vacation. It's a chance to take a deep breath, reconnect with ourselves and the people we love, and build habits that support us throughout the rest of the year. You don't need big plans or fancy trips — just intention and small, daily acts of self-care. Because in the end, the summers we remember most vividly are the ones that truly brought us closer together.





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