

Hello everyone and thank you for joining us for today's session titled: Making the Most of Your Summer Break.

Today we will be learning about some effective ways to make the most of your summer holiday and maximize the moments and memories for you and your family. Let's start with our objectives for today. We will talk about balancing work with school holidays, what to pack into your summer suitcase, ways to enjoy a summer holiday at home, and the benefits of fresh air and sunshine.

Let's start with some things to consider. What is your favorite thing about the summer break? Is your favorite thing holidays? The past summer, things looked very different from the norm. Lockdowns and quarantine made summer traveling impossible for many people. This summer, however, travel has opened back up in many countries. Do you have a trip planned for this summer? Is time off from work your favorite part about the summer break? Maybe the weather? Or what about valuable family time?

Many of us have been working from home since early 2020, so let's talk about working from home during the summer break. Number one: set work boundaries. Set work boundaries and times that you will be working and don't let the normal routines slide out of the window, make sure that everyone is up at normal times and doing their jobs to help around the house. Number two: use "out of office" when on holiday. Tell clients that you will be away or in holiday mode, then they won't expect a reply straight away. Put an "out of office" on to say that you will be checking emails at specific times and if it's urgent to message you. Number three: manage your children's expectations. Tell them how and why you are working and plan your day if you are working from home. Sometimes, children don't understand that they are home from school, but you still have to work. Number four: plan ahead as much as you can for childcare, but also take each week at a time. Six to eight weeks can seem like a long daunting amount of time to fill if you look at it as one big block of time; instead break it down into manageable chunks of time.

Packing your summer suitcase essentials. Learning: keep your mind active by learning a new skill. For example: trying out a new sport or society, doing an online course separate to work, and attending optional seminars. Learning new skills activates new neural pathways in the brain that will keep your mind active

and encourages out-of-the box thinking, which can be practical for your own personal resilience. Relax and Recharge. Research has found that taking breaks can improve your mood, increase your concentration and attention span, and boost your performance. It also reduces the risk of burnout, which involves mental exhaustion and stress. Read a book. Reading helps improve our memory and empathy, but also allows us to lose ourselves into a story in fiction or diverts our thoughts to one specific topic in nonfiction. Reading has been shown to make us feel more positive too, with other health benefits, including helping with depression, cutting stress, and reducing the chances of Alzheimer's disease. Have Fun. Having fun is physiologically good for you as it helps balance out stress and feel-good hormones, such as serotonin and endorphins! It also helps boost our productivity, energy, and overall cognition. Go outdoors. Connecting with nature is extremely beneficial for our mental and physical well-being. It helps reduce feelings of stress and anger and helps you feel more relaxed. Be creative. Being creative helps develop your problem-solving skills and enhances your ability to adapt to difficult situations.

Not everyone will have the opportunity to go away on holiday this year, so here are some ideas for making the most of your summer holiday at home and ways to spend time with loved ones. Just because you are at home doesn't mean you can't still make memories. Research shows that gardening can significantly reduce depression and anxiety and improve social functioning. In fact, gardening is classified as a moderate form of exercise. Gardening calms you and improves your mood and can give you a sense of empowerment as you can see the progress of what you have created. You can also involve your family! Start cooking. Trying new recipes boosts your creativity. Cooking and eating together are essential parts of the day for cultures in many parts of the world. Cooking with your kids helps to teach them how to make informed choices about what they eat and cooking together improves your relationships and forms stronger bonds with loved ones. Arts and crafts develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination in kids. It also promotes innovation and creativity and research demonstrates its effects on reducing stress or anxiety. Camping outdoors with friends and family allows you to connect with nature to improve your mental and physical wellbeing. Camping also gives you an opportunity to learn new skills, work as a team when putting tents up, and develop problem-solving skills.

If you do anything this summer, spend some time outside. There are a multitude of benefits of spending time outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine! Being connected with nature improves your physical wellbeing. It improves blood pressure, heart rate, and your immune system. Your brain needs more than 20 percent of the body's oxygen to function, therefore fresh air undoubtedly improves your concentration. Sunshine and fresh air boost serotonin levels to improve your mood. Finally, when your skin is exposed to sunshine, this increases levels of vitamin D that is crucial for healthy functioning.

We have gone over many different ways to spend your summer break today. So, what firsts can you create this summer? Embracing opportunities for new and different experiences is a powerful way to encourage a curious and open mind. Create a list with your family and don't forget to be adventurous!

Summer break is a great way to make memories. Think ahead to your summer break with excitement and anticipation. Restrictions may mean that the summer break is different to other years but planning activities with the family is a fun way to look ahead to what you can do. Schedule in activities for every day and stick to them. Write them down to make it easier.

So, take a few moments to review what we have talked about in today's session. Think about what new memories you can make this summer? Remember to be creative, involve your family and to have fun!

I would like to thank everyone for joining us today. Please remember that your EAP is available 24/seven and 365 days a year to help you with whatever it is you may need. Take care and don't forget to enjoy your summer break!