

Building Resilience Over Summer Break

High school

STRONG⁴LIFE



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

Resilient teens are better able to handle life's ups and downs. Summer breaks can bring up lots of feelings. Some teens may feel excited about the break, while others may feel disappointed to leave school and friends behind. As your teen enters summer vacation, you can help them cope with all their feelings, find balance, and build resilience by practicing healthy habits that take care of both their body and mind.

Following consistent routines

Even though summer break may be less structured than the school year, it's still important to maintain some routines so that teens know what to expect. Here are some ways to incorporate routines during summer break:



Communication

We can all benefit from continuing to learn how to express our emotions in healthy ways—even teenagers. One way you can help is by creating a daily routine for communication to help your teen learn that it's OK and normal to feel whatever they feel and share it with others.

- **Start the conversation by asking open-ended questions**, such as “How are you feeling today?” or “What’s something that’s been on your mind today?”
- **Actively listen.** Make eye contact, put away any distractions and listen to understand.
- **Normalize and validate their feelings.** Let your child know you understand by repeating back exactly what you hear, without dismissing, minimizing, judging or interpreting. Reassure them that their feelings are normal and OK.



Coping skills

Coping skills are things we can do to feel better and help us manage stress. Summer break is a great time to learn and practice a variety of coping skills with your teen, such as grounding your body and mind.

Grounding helps us improve concentration and decrease anxiety by using our senses to focus on the present moment. Encourage your teen to practice this regularly so it becomes familiar and comfortable. That way, they can use it whenever and wherever they need it.



Sleep

It's common for sleep routines to change over the summer with more relaxed schedules, but getting quality sleep is important for the body and mind all year long. And being consistent over the summer can make it easier to transition back to school. Support your teen in creating summer sleep habits that allow them to get enough rest, but also won't make it difficult to transition back once the school year begins. Encourage your teen to:

- Power down devices at least an hour before bed, and keep screens out of the bedroom.
- Keep consistent sleep and wake times.
- Practice calming activities before bed, such as reading, journaling or listening to music.

Grounding



5 things you can see. Maybe it's a book, a painting or a chair.



4 things you can touch. Maybe it's a dog, your desk or your leg.



3 things you can hear. Maybe it's a ticking clock, a car alarm or a dog barking.



2 things you can smell. Maybe it's the scent of soap or lotion on your hands, air freshener or freshly cut grass.



1 thing you can taste. Maybe it's the drink or snack you just had.

Nutrition

When schedules and activities change, it's common for eating habits to change as well. To prepare, try to have healthy snacks available, such as fruit, nuts, string cheese and yogurt. It's also important to make sure your teen is drinking enough water to stay hydrated. Freezing fruit or herbs with water in ice trays is one way to make water more appealing (instead of caffeine or sugary drinks). Encourage your teen to try out different combinations to see what they like best.

Screen time

With less structure and more downtime, teens may spend more time on screens over the summer. Try to set limits on screen time and encourage balance so your teen is still getting plenty of physical activity, rest, and time to connect with friends and family. Although it may be challenging to limit screen time as much as you'd like, try to be consistent with expectations for mealtimes, family activities and before bed.

Summertime independence

Summer is a great time for your teen to develop independence, which is an important part of building resilience. *You know your teen best. Make suggestions based on your teen's skills and abilities, as well as your comfort.*

Planning and cooking a family meal

Whenever teens cook meals on their own, they're developing planning and organization skills and becoming more independent. From figuring out the ingredients for a recipe to what utensils or tools they need and when to start cooking, these skills will help them as they grow into adulthood.

Finding a summer job

Whether it's a steady job or getting paid to help with babysitting, lawn work or helping a neighbor with tasks around their home, summer jobs offer teens a chance to gain a sense of responsibility.

Navigating curfew

As teens have more opportunities to spend time with friends over the summer, they may question their curfew. Work with your teen to determine a reasonable time you can both agree on, and make plans ahead of time to prepare for any challenges that could arise, such as if they're running late.

Caretaking

Encourage your teen to take on tasks, such as watching younger siblings, taking the family pet for a walk or making sure the plants are watered.

