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Preparing for Summer Vacation

Kentucky Psychological Foundation Offers Tips to Help Kentuckians During Mental Health Awareness Month

Florence, KY, May 02, 2018 — While summer vacation equals fun for many kids, it may lead to added stress for parents and caretakers. Finding day care options for children out of school or even planning family vacations can leave parents feeling stretched and stressed.

According to The American Psychological Association's 2016 Stress in America™ survey, money, work and the economy remain consistent sources of stress. These stressors may be amplified by financial costs associated with summer child care needs and family vacations.

“Parents may feel that there is social pressure to send children to camp or spend increased time with them during the summer months. These silent demands can lead to added stress, especially if finances are tight or if taking time off from work is difficult,” Dr. Jennifer Price, Chair of the Kentucky Psychological Foundation said. “Setting expectations about summer vacation with your family can help lesson these stressors.”

Don't expect summer to be better from other times of year and help your family to do the same. Here are some tips for parents and caregivers to survive summertime related stress:

Being away from home. It's important to remember that spending time away from home can be difficult for both child and parent. Whether it be sending a child to a day camp or on an overnight visit to a relative's house, receiving a tearful phone call or a sad note from your child can pull at the heart strings. And though dealing with homesickness is often a source of stress, it's very common. Plan for the first day of the child being away by reminding your child that camp or spending time with family is fun. Or, it may be helpful for parents to talk ahead of time with the camp counselor or family member about addressing possible concerns your child might experience regarding homesickness.

Summer school. Although summer is usually a time for kids to be out of school and to take a break from academics, summer school may be beneficial for some kids. Parents who are concerned about their child’s academic performance or keeping up in the classroom, might consider summer school as a way for their child to not lose academic gains over the summer.

Planning trips and vacations. Summer is typically the time for families to go on weekend trips or take a family vacation since kids are not in school. It’s important for parents to manage expectations when planning trips with the entire family. Have conversations about the summer activities that fit into your family’s schedule and budget and make compromises if necessary. For example, Kentucky offers many state parks and local attractions that are ideal for short trips or “stay-cations.”

Avoiding boredom. If parents or caregivers find children showing signs of being antsy or bored during the day, it may be a time to find creative activities for kids to do while they’re at home. Maybe it is working on a craft project or taking the dog for a walk. Parents should not feel pressure to have the entire summer planned out for kids, as it’s a time to unwind for both parents and kids. Low key family fun can be just as great as a trip somewhere.

According to Dr. Brigid Kleinman, a Kentucky psychologist in private practice, “With a bit of preplanning, open communication, and reasonable expectations, summer can be fun and productive for both kids and adults.”

To learn more about stress and mind/body health visit the American Psychological Association at www.apa.org/helpcenter and follow @APAHelpCenter. To find out more about the Kentucky Psychological Foundation visit www.kentuckypsychologicalfoundation.com and follow @KYPsychFnd.

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The Kentucky Psychological Foundation's (KPF) mission is to build a psychologically healthy Kentucky through public education, work place health, diversity awareness, disaster resources, and psychology leadership development. More information and a link to support KPF can be found at www.kentuckypsychologicalfoundation.com.

The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes more than 115,700 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.