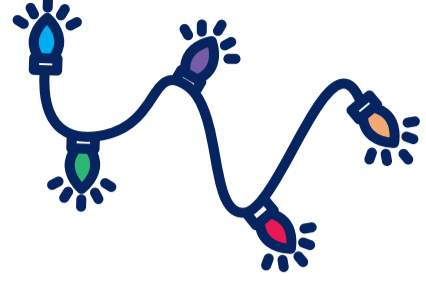


Embracing the Holidays

During the Pandemic



The holidays are just around the corner. During the holidays, we normally experience a range of emotions from excitement and joy to stress and loneliness. The 2020 holiday season, and how we celebrate, will look significantly different, threatening to put a damper on positive emotions and increase negative ones. However, the holidays do not have to be canceled, just need to be reimagined. With some preparation and some out-of-the-box thinking, we can have a joyful holiday season.

Coping with the holidays during COVID-19 begins with identifying and respecting your own needs, concerns and motivations, then communicating them. Creativity and technology can help make sure everyone is included in a safe and healthy way.

Here are some suggestions for handling holiday planning during the pandemic:

- + Think about changing your family traditions to adapt to social distancing. If hosting a big dinner, meeting up with friends and attending holiday parties are no longer possible, consider virtual alternatives to keep in touch with important people in your life.
- + Follow the CDC’s recommendations when organizing a gathering at your home. If possible, hold outdoor events with a small group of local friends and family members, make sure everyone wears a mask, maintain social distance and do not share food or drinks.
- + If you have lost a loved one, honor their memory with a special ornament, wreath or centerpiece, or perhaps a candlelit during a holiday. If you can, take part in a voluntary activity that your loved one used to do.
- + If in-person religious services or events have changed see if you can still participate via televised services, video chats and online prayer meetings.

Most importantly, take care of your mental health. The pandemic has increased stress and anxiety levels for many people. If you feel overwhelmed, try to replace negative thoughts by focusing on the things you can control. Building your resilience skills can help protect your mental health.

Try these tips to use your strengths and build resilience:

Keep connected by staying in touch with positive and supportive people, even if you cannot see them in person.



Recharge your batteries by allowing yourself time every day to do something you like. Taking time to engage in a pleasant activity or hobby will give you a positive lift.

Keep your sense of humor by seeking out things that make you laugh.



Practice gratitude by focusing on the things you are grateful for every day liked loved ones and nature.



The bottom line is the holidays will happen even during a global pandemic. To strengthen your resiliency and your ability to cope this holiday season, think creatively, be open to planning some new traditions, and above all — be kind to yourself.

To limit the harmful effects of stress on your mental or physical health, it’s important to learn to live a healthy lifestyle, and if needed, to not hesitate to ask loved ones or health professionals for help. Your EAP is here to help. Call to access no cost and confidential support.

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