

# HOLIDAYS DURING COVID-19



**WELL-BEING. DONE WELL.**



# NAVIGATING THROUGH HOLIDAY PLANNING CONVERSATIONS



## HOW DO I START THE CONVERSATION ABOUT HOLIDAY PLANS?

Celebrations will likely look different this year, so it's a good idea to start planning early. One way to do this is by thinking about what you truly value about the holidays — maybe it's being with family, or having fun making food with your kids, or partaking in a meaningful religious experience. Take the time to think about what is important to you in THIS season to help you navigate the rest of the details, like how many people you feel safe around, if you'll be indoors or outdoors, or if you'd rather participate virtually.

Be sure to consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for holiday safety recommendations and guidelines to keep in mind when planning for holiday gatherings.

Once you have a general idea of how you'd like to celebrate, start talking with others to see how your ideas align.

## TIPS TO DEAL WITH (WELL-INTENTIONED) RELATIVES:

Many will have to navigate differing opinions with those we typically celebrate with. This can put a damper on the holidays in a normal year. Keep in mind that you can't control them. Even though you can't change how they act, you can control how you respond. When you are navigating through these challenging conversations here are a few suggestions to help maintain boundaries and keep the mood light:

- **If you're in person, invite someone else into the conversation.** This can create a buffer and may create additional perspectives.
- **Ask about them.** If you can shift the focus of the conversation off yourself, it's easier to sit back and listen.
- **Assume positive intentions.** Most people are not trying to make us feel uncomfortable. If you can remember this it might reduce some frustration.
- **Come prepared.** Chances are you've dealt with this person before and know their communication style, or where they'll try to take a conversation. Think about how you want to engage before you speak with them. Maintain those boundaries the best that you can when you do.

# ASSESSING RISK FOR THE HOLIDAYS

November and December are often times when many families travel long distances to celebrate together. Travel increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others.

## LOWER RISK ACTIVITIES

- Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving or the next Monday
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home

## MODERATE RISK ACTIVITIES

- Having a small outdoor dinner with family and friends live in your community
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Attending a small outdoor sports or other events with safety precautions in place

## HIGHER RISK ACTIVITIES

**Avoid these higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19:**

- Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving
- Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race Attending crowded parades
- Using alcohol or drugs, which can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household






# WHEN THE HOLIDAYS DON'T FEEL QUITE SO MERRY AND BRIGHT



Stating that the holidays may look a little different this year is an understatement. Many families are navigating how to celebrate in a safe, comfortable and reasonably familiar fashion. Keeping in mind that our normal holiday traditions while enjoyable, may also be sources of stress. We may be able to find ways to redefine our hopes for the holidays in a way that creates a new perspective.

## GIVE YOURSELF A GIFT: A HOLIDAY SURVIVAL KIT

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- A background image showing gingerbread cookies of various shapes (stars, snowflakes, gingerbread men) decorated with white icing, resting on a metal cooling rack. To the left, several metal cookie cutters are visible on a wooden surface.
- **Set Realistic Expectations Acknowledge Losses —Talk to Someone**
  - **Try to Keep a Normal Routine When Appropriate**
  - **Remember it's Okay to Say "No"**
  - **Set a Spending Limit and Stick To It Honor Traditions when you can**
  - **Volunteer Your Time**
  - **Watch Alcohol/Sugar Consumption**
  - **Get Enough Sleep**
  - **Move Your Body**
  - **Set Aside Time for Yourself**
  - **Laugh**

# TAKING CONTROL OF THE HOLIDAYS

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

**While it seems easier to hibernate through the season, here are some tips for making it a little more manageable.**

- 1. Lower Your Expectations:** This year is going to be different. That is OK. You may not have the energy (mental or physical) to hang the lights, write the cards and bake 12 different types of cookies. Pick a few things that you love and let the rest go.
- 2. Make Space for Emotions:** It is OK to feel sadness, anger, frustration or grief, especially during the holidays. Give yourself time to express your feelings, talk, cry or journal. Ignoring or minimizing your feelings may make you feel even worse.
- 3. Be Selective About Events:** Social events may serve as a welcome distraction or they may be a burden. If burdensome, give yourself permission to skip a few things this year. Practice saying, "We cannot make it this year." It is OK not to give a reason.
- 4. Put Yourself First:** It sounds and feels selfish, but it may be your key to survival. We are not meant to function at a high level of stress for a long period of time. Take time for self-care: a bath, a cup of tea, a walk or deep breathing.
- 5. Seek Out Good Support:** Not everyone needs to know what is going on at home. Instead, confide in a few trustworthy friends, join a support group or seek support from your Assistance Program.
- 6. Think Positive Thoughts:** If you are gravitating toward negative thinking, counter those thoughts with something positive. Create a list of things that you are thankful for, or focus on the meaning of the season, rather than the task list.
- 7. Help Others:** One of the best ways to combat feelings of isolation and depression is by helping others. Find an organization to support by volunteering or donating. This does not change or minimize the struggles in your own life, but it may shift your focus.



# SETTING BOUNDARIES AND SAYING "NO"

As we enter a season that is looking more like none we have entered before – adjustment is a tool that we can use to our benefit. It will be critical that we practice self-care and continue to refine our expectations of ourselves. Learning to say “no” is a crucial form of self-care and is an adjusted mentality for many of us. While we often hear the phrase, “self care”, figuring out when to say no isn’t talked about quite as often. There is a large population that has struggled with saying “no” to plans, opportunities, and commitments. And in our culture, we often say “yes” until we begin feel an overwhelming sense of guilt until we have eventually overcommitted ourselves.

**Recognizing that when we say “yes” to things that we wish or want to say “no” to means that there is less space to say “yes” to the things that bring us the most joy, hope, opportunity and self-love.**



## HELPFUL TIPS IN LEARNING HOW TO SAY NO

- Listen To Your Gut
- Assess Your Current Obligations
- Practice
- Say Yes AND No, Emphatically
- Reduce Second Guessing
- Prioritize Yourself
- Always Speak Kindly to Yourself
- Know Your Motivations
- Continue Checking in with Yourself

# Preparing Kids for Holiday Changes



As adults we all know the holidays of 2020 will look different than in years past. We've been adapting for many months. However, kids not only have their own expectations of the holidays but they also feel the stress of their parents. Warning kids that the holidays will look different is important to helping manage expectations.

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TO HELP KIDS PREPARE AND ADJUST:

- Validating feelings of sadness and frustration by letting them know it's okay to feel this way, but also redirecting them to some positive perspectives.
- Letting them make suggestions about new traditions or holiday activities.
- Talking about the parts of the holidays they love the most and find ways to re- create those experiences.
- Finding ways to creatively connect with family members and loved ones that kids are look forward to seeing to maintain some sense of normalcy.
- Focusing on gratitude and bringing it back to basics.

