

TO YOUR HEALTH

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No Place Like Home for the Holidays

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With the holidays fast approaching, how will we find meaningful ways to celebrate them with our loved ones from afar? Our need to continue to be socially distanced and wear masks is forcing us to be creative about how to keep some holiday traditions alive while making new ones. In light of the current situation, even if families are unable to travel at the moment, we can still come together virtually. Here are some ideas about staying safe while still making the holidays special.

Holiday Meals

So many traditions are centered around sitting down to enjoy meals together. If families aren't able to physically be together in these times, we will need to find other meaningful ways to share time with our loved ones.

One idea is to designate a time for a remote family Zoom meeting over Thanksgiving dinner in which we all eat safely (virtually) together in our own homes. Since Thanksgiving is meant to be a time of giving thanks for our blessings, each family member could go around the room and say one thing for which they are grateful during a family holiday call or dinner over Zoom. Even in these crazy times, there is still so much to be thankful for. When we give voice to our gratitude, it can be uplifting for us all.

For those that like to cook together, we could cook our favorite traditional holiday meals with loved ones by designating a time when we each cook a particular dish at the same time as a family member and share the experience



virtually through Zoom, FaceTime or a phone call.



Another thought for a safe way to celebrate

Thanksgiving is to compile favorite family holiday recipes. Creating a family cookbook can be something that will be treasured and passed down to future generations.

Gift Giving

Gift giving will have its own challenges as we get closer to the holidays. It may be an unintended silver lining of social distancing that we will not want to spend as much time indoors shopping in stores. We can always order gifts online and have them sent to the recipients. Or we can think outside the box and come up with other "gifts" we can give from our hearts.

One idea is to write each loved one a letter of appreciation that includes all the things we admire and value about them. Being on the receiving end of such a letter would surely be an uplifting message to hear any time of year, but especially now. This is an opportunity to tell the people we love how much they mean to us.

Another alternative to buying gifts might be to make something ourselves. Do you sew or knit or make jelly or paint or write music? Are you the keeper of the family history that you could write down and give as a gift? These kinds of gifts from the heart can be deeply meaningful to those in our lives.

If you decide to have a remote family gathering over Zoom, you could reminisce and view old family pictures together by sharing the screen. Or you could create games that all family members could participate in from afar. In a Zoom meeting with friends recently, we played



a virtual game of “Jeopardy” with categories that one person created having to do with our shared history. This could be facts about family history, vacations, shared experiences, etc.

“Here are some suggestions from Magellan Healthcare 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.*
- *If you have lost a loved one, honor their memory with a special ornament, wreath or centerpiece, or perhaps a candle lit 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.”*



As we all get used to technology as a way to stay connected, there is sometimes a learning curve. If you need help navigating Zoom or other computer issues, please contact Marcia Feldman at mfeldman@cwvillage.org or Ext. 1389 to make an appointment.

Box Breathing to Reduce Stress

The holidays can be a stressful time, even more so when trying to make plans during a pandemic. Box breathing is a powerful, yet simple, technique that you can do any time. Focused breathing calms nerves, improves focus and relieves stress by helping to regulate the autonomic nervous system.

How to do box breathing

- Begin by slowly exhaling all of your air out.
- Then, gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4.
- Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4.
- Then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.
- At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for the count of 4.

If the image of a square works for you, imagine your breath and the pauses in between the breath moving around the box. This simple technique for lowering stress can be utilized anywhere, anytime.

Try a couple rounds of it the next time you feel stressed. You can also practice it during routine everyday activities. I try to do it whenever I wash my hands. Instead of guessing how long 20 seconds is or singing “Happy Birthday” twice, why not practice a couple rounds of box breathing? It’s a great way to incorporate another healthy habit into everyday life. ~Susan

