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How to "FACE" the Holidays during the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020



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Summary: The Year 2020 has perhaps been the most stressful year for most people. As the winter holidays approach for 2020, we're trying our best to celebrate and grieve at the same time. Here are some tips on how to "FACE" the holidays: F)ocus on what's in your control; A)cknowledge this year is different; C)onnect creatively and E)ngage safely. Stay safe, and here's hoping that 2021 will be a better year.

Introduction

The Year 2020 has perhaps been the most stressful year for most people. As the winter holidays approach for 2020, we're trying our best to celebrate and grieve at the same time.

Here are some tips on how to "FACE" the winter holidays in 2020.

F)ocus on what's in your control
A)cknowledge this year is different
C)onnect creatively
E)ngage safely

Special thanks to the Geriatric Psychiatry Community Service of Ottawa for the FACE mnemonic (and Jean Cloutier's Newsletter).

F)ocus on What's In Your Control

Focus on what you can do, as opposed to what you cannot do, for example:

- Have a small gathering with immediate family.
- Drive by and visit older relatives, and chat outside while warmly dressed.
- Drop off gifts for relatives.
- Watch movies virtually with others.
- Have a video chat with loved ones....

What can you do?

Do you have kids? Ask them: “What are you looking forward to?”...

A)cknowledge This Year is Different

All of us have lost so much this year. It's important to acknowledge all those losses, and grieve through them.

Do you have kids? Have an honest conversation with them about what you cannot do this year, such as:

- “Unfortunately, with the pandemic... We cannot have Boxing Day with your grandparents.” “We cannot have the usual huge party that we have.” “I’m really sorry -- I wish we could.”

Support them with their feelings.

- Are they getting sad? Give them a hug and let them have a good cry.
- Are they getting angry or frustrated? Underneath anger is sadness -- name the sadness that is underneath to help them express the underlying sadness.
- You might say: “I completely get it if you feel upset or sad. Its good to let out the feelings. It helps to have a good cry, and not keep all those feelings bottled up.”
- Have kleenex standing by in order for everyone to have a good cry.

C)onnect Creatively

What an interesting time this pandemic.. Being in this together means we must stay physically apart...

Ask yourself, “What is it that makes a meaningful holiday?” Seeing family and friends? Having a chance to rest? Helping others? Enjoying the traditions?

Creative ideas include:

- Staying within your own bubble, and having a small get together.
- Having video chat with more extended relatives and family.
- Having an outside get together with extended relatives and family.

E)ngage Safely

Engaging safely is making sure that if you do connect physically and see people face-to-face, that you do it in a way that keeps everyone safe, following your local public health recommendations.

It can be challenging when you have family and friends that disagree about following physical distancing guidelines.

Ask yourself: “What am I comfortable with?” “What are my values?” “Left to my own devices, leaving out everyone else’s opinion, what do I feel safest with?”
E.g. gathering outside vs. inside
E.g. gathering in a public place vs. in someone’s home
E.g. sharing a meal vs. not sharing a meal
Etc...

Is there a disagreement with family/friends?

- Are you the one being more cautious?
    - First and foremost, stay calm. Validate to them that: “I appreciate that you really want to connect. You care about others.”
    - Express your perspective, and let them know how you agree: “I care about everyone else too. And it is for this reason that I am following the physical distancing guidelines.”
    - Express gratitude, and give them hope that things will get better in the future: “Thank you for your understanding. When things ease up, we will definitely get together, and do all those things that we couldn’t do now.”
- Are they more cautious than you are?
    - Remind yourself, that ultimately, by staying safe and following public health guidelines, they are keeping everyone safe.
    - Many people think that “only the elderly are affected”, but even young adults can die from catching COVID -- imagine how horrible you’d feel if your family event ended up killing a family member…
    - Express gratitude that at the end of the day, they simply want to keep everyone safe: “I respect that you want to keep the family safe. Let’s meet face to face when things relax again.

Do You Live On Your Own?

If you live on your own, it may be more challenging to connect to others during the holidays, and it can feel lonely.

For more ideas about surviving the holidays and dealing with loneliness during the holidays
https://www.ementalhealth.ca/index.php?m=article&ID=56004

For More Information

FACE the Holidays, Newsletter from GPCSO, by Shauna Adeland.
https://www.gpcso.org/en/our-s...
Be Social Wise - Guidance for Social Gatherings During COVID-19
https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/hosting-postponing-or-cancelling-mass-gatherings.aspx

Ways to Celebrate Safely during the Holidays
https://ottawa.ca/en/news/ten-ways-celebrate-safely-during-holidays

References

Newsletter for Jean Cloutier, Councillor for Alta Vista Ward, City of Ottawa, Dec 18, 2020.
https://us10.campaign-archive.com/?u=94fb2266d515906cf755ee6f2&id=41a6e407e6

About This Document

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