



FACE the Holidays

A guide for older adults

Many older adults are worried and anxious about the upcoming season. The holidays can be joyful, and sometimes hard. The one thing we know is that this year will be different. But social distancing doesn't have to mean isolation. We can find new ways to celebrate and connect with each other, and maybe even start a new holiday tradition! If you're feeling worried about what this holiday holds, here's a guide to thinking creatively about what truly matters this season.

FOCUS on what's in your control

When we're feeling anxious, it helps to focus on what we're able to do: for ourselves, our families, and the community. Think about how you want to spend the holidays safe from COVID 19, then start the conversation with your loved ones. If this isn't easy for you, write down your thoughts first so you can be clear. Will you stay physically apart but get together for chats and meals on the computer? It'll feel good to talk about it and work out a plan together. Connecting with people, making memories, and continuing or starting new traditions *is* possible this year!

ACKNOWLEDGE this year is different

Nothing is normal about 2020. Accepting this is step one in letting yourself grieve over what's lost with COVID 19. It's okay to feel disappointed about having to give up some traditions you love. Older adults have lived through many difficult seasons, but this is a particularly difficult year for all. Recognize what you're feeling and respond to yourself with kindness and compassion. There are no right or wrong ways to experience grief, but acknowledging the loss of cherished social connections this season is an important step to be able to move forward.

CONNECT creatively

What are the ingredients of a joyful holiday? Seeing loved ones? Watching a snowfall? A favourite story? Helping others, or enjoying the hopeful spirit of the season? Thinking about what the holidays truly mean to you can help you get creative with your plan. Maybe your family can watch a movie on the same night, and chat during or after. Play a family favourite album at the same time. Or swap stories of holidays past on a video call or through letters. Food also brings us together. Start a cookie exchange, or make a traditional family meal and share the recipe with everyone. What else makes you happy—decorations, family traditions, gifts, spiritual contemplation? There is power in connecting with our own memories, traditions and needs.

ENGAGE safely

Engage and connect with those you love in the ways that work for you. Do as much or as little as you want: no explanations or apologies needed. You can feel connected in a range of ways even when apart. Stay safe by honoring your own needs this year. It is possible to feel connected to the spirit of the season, past traditions and your loved ones, while keeping yourself and your community healthy and safe.

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Here's a chart to help you plan holiday connections this year, and an example to get you started.

Favourite traditions	Acknowledge feelings	Connect creatively	Engage safely
Watching a favorite movie together	I'm disappointed I won't be able to watch it with my grandchildren	I'll tell my family how much it means to me, and suggest we watch it at the same time in our different homes, with the same snack. Maybe over Zoom so we can share the experience, or speak over the phone afterwards.	This feels safe for me.

For some this continues to be a lonely and difficult time of year. If you are worried about your own mental health, please talk to your family doctor.

If you need urgent support please call 911 or reach out to these local crisis lines:

Distress Centre	613-238-3311	dcottawa.on.ca
Mental Health Crisis Line	613-722-6914 or 1-866-996-0991	crisisline.ca



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