

## HOLIDAY DIFFERENCES—3 Things to Consider

“The 2020 Holidays... A Season Like No Other”



Typically at the end of the year, we’re looking forward with anticipation to all that the holiday season has to offer: taking time off from work for a much needed vacation, gathering with family and friends, attending what seems like endless holiday parties, enjoying holiday decorations, filling our bellies with our favorite holiday foods, the hustle and bustle of shopping and the joy of gift giving. Whether you celebrate Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, the new year or a combination of these holidays or others, there is little doubt that this year will be different.

Maybe being cheerful and in a festive mood during the holiday season is not your experience. We know that many have the “holiday blues” where feelings of sadness, loneliness, stress and anxiety intensify and sometimes feel all consuming. Research by the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) concluded that 64% of people with mental illness report that holidays make their conditions worse. Think about it, with all the “holiday fun” comes added pressure to interaction with others, cook, juggle year end work demands with scheduled family gatherings, and deal with financial stressors.

This year social distancing is recommended in all interactions. We also need to consider that the many of the cultural and/or religious activities that provide us with a sense of joy and tradition have most likely been canceled or drastically modified. To add to this, 2020 has brought on increasing levels of grief, anxiety and uncertainty related to the loss of so many due to COVID-19, the challenges of politics, racial unrest and financial instability.

Maybe you’re thinking, “I know it’s going to be different, but can you provide me with some suggestions to make the best of the holidays? We want to challenge you to be open to safe & creative ways to experience your holidays when engaging in family traditions aren’t possible. And when you come up with something that works for you please consider sharing your ideas with us.

## 1) Gathering with Family & Friends



What do we do when family and loved ones are at the center of all our holiday gatherings and COVID19 is running rampant? We find ways to practice established safety guidelines and look for creative ways to still feel the sense of joy and togetherness that the holidays can bring. Hopefully, we are all familiar the CDC's recommendations for hosting or attending holiday celebrations, but if not, please click on [their Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#). This allows you and your family to come up with a plan that helps reduce the risk of COVID

transmission while celebrating. The CDC identifies lowest to highest risks by addressing factors such as community levels of COVID19, the location, duration and number of people attending the gathering, where people are traveling from and their behavior prior to and during the holiday celebration. Outdoor, small groups with social distancing are safest.

Being with family or staying in their homes for extended periods of time during the holidays can be very stressful! Fortunately, this year you have a good excuse not to stay at dreaded relatives' homes during the pandemic. Focus on self-care this holiday season, taking time to deal with your emotions and engage in activities that you enjoy. It's a better option than dealing with rude or obnoxious family members.

### Things to Consider

Do I live in an area where an outdoor celebration is feasible? What items would I need to make it comfortable and safe (i.e. think portable heaters, social distanced tables, fire pit, etc.). If gathering in person with a limited number of people isn't possible, then what are some options? Have an online Friendsgiving or Thanksgiving; prepare holiday meals for your elderly or isolated loved ones and drop food and gifts off at their home, share and cook family recipes together online, take a moment to send holiday cards and/or gifts and open them together, have an online virtual video holiday sharing or gift opening event, re-creating cultural or religious events and virtually share with family and friends.

To honor the loss of those not with you this holiday season have your family share their special memories of them, or watch your favorite holiday movies together via Facetime, House party, Zoom or other online sources. Spend time talking with those who have lost loved ones. Take some time to learn about holidays that your family normally doesn't celebrate by researching, talking with co-workers, neighbors and friends. Who knows, maybe you'll gain a greater appreciation for others' cultural, ethnic or religious practices and be able to share in some of their festivities.

## 2.) Traveling



More people travel for Thanksgiving and through the end of the year than any other time of the year. Travelocity and CNN reported that up to 60% of people state that they won't be traveling this year due to the pandemic. Most experts don't recommend traveling for the holidays for fear that there will be interstate spreading of the Coronavirus pandemic, particularly if people are traveling from various highest risk areas and gathering for an extended period. There is increased anxiety during the pandemic for traveling and gathering during the holidays, getting COVID and passing it on to elderly family members.

### Things to Consider

It may not make sense to travel out of state to visit family, but what about a rental/vacation home for your immediate family to enjoy for a few days? Can you take a Road trip on your days off to explore a place that you've never been before? How can testing prior to and after traveling, along with following CDC safety guidelines make some travel possible? Can you give family members something to look forward to by planning an exciting get away when times are safer?

## 3.) Shopping

Shopping is almost as much a part of the holidays as anything else. This may seem materialistic to talk about shopping & celebrating the holidays, but it is intimately tied to holiday traditions. Stories about Black Friday bargains are likely to go down in history, probably second only to grandma's famous dessert. Needless to say, going shopping with the masses is not recommended and most major retailers have strayed away from this. In addition, our economy is struggling, and many have increased financial challenges and are planning to spend less and save more due to these uncertain financial times.

Finding the perfect gift for our loved ones, seeing the excitement on someone's face after receiving their #1 gift on their wish list, can frequently bring us joy. Shopping can be therapeutic, especially when we see it as an outlet to get out of the house after being restricted for these last 8 months. Black Friday traditions will not be the same, but you can still achieve the same goal by shopping online and supporting small businesses.

Have a discussion with family members about, if you or loved ones are struggling financially, NOT trading gifts this year and focusing on volunteering, paying a loved one's energy bill or buying groceries, or other ways to

share togetherness and appreciate what we do have. This might provide some necessary relief for some and allow them to enjoy the holidays even more. Shop online through Amazon or the many other online retailers. Have your gifts shipped and delivered directly and then open gifts together online. Have an outdoor bonfire & gift exchange if it's not too cold. Drop off sweet treats from a local bakery at your friend's front door. Or better yet, consider making home-made goods and giving them away as presents.

The way we celebrate the Holidays will be different, but if we don't lose sight of the true meaning of the holidays, we will be limited to how it's always been. Let's think about how we can create new traditions or modify traditions to make long lasting memories. Don't forget we would love to hear ways that you have decided to celebrate this year, despite the differences.

If you are struggling and need additional support during this challenging holiday season, try Ulliance. We are here to listen to you and support you because we understand that this holiday season in particular is like no other.



**Ulliance provides no cost, confidential, short term counseling  
for you & your family.**

Call us- we're here to help **800.448.8326**