

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

When the pandemic first hit in late winter 2020, many thought it would be over by Easter. Then Canada day. Then Labour day. Yet here we are facing the winter holiday season with escalating COVID-19 cases throughout the country and in our own communities. Between parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, family meals and gift swapping, the persistent checklist of demands which may have caused you stress and anxiety last year has been replaced with a harsh new reality. For all us, the holiday season feels different this year. Many have lost loved ones and will be missing someone's presence during the festivities, and even more have lost their jobs and are therefore dealing with financial stress. Others, like healthcare and frontline workers may be putting in overtime and unable to spend as much time with loved ones. Even the warmest of traditions lose their luster when you are worried about your healthcare needs and those of someone you love. In a year of the unexpected, one thing has come to be expected: change. Change is difficult for most people, especially when you didn't ask for it, let alone expect it. But that doesn't mean the holidays are destined to be a disappointment this year. Here are a few ways to cope with the lousy feeling you're experiencing while still enjoying the holidays.



Take joy in all the bullets you'll dodge by NOT celebrating with family. We all know what I mean... On this of all years, let us finally destigmatize wanting to just spend the holidays at home. Let 2020 be the year where we let ourselves and each other break free from the social scripts of a Hallmark movie. Just because we're supposed to want big family gatherings and do festive activities over the holidays doesn't mean it's actually what we want year after year. Decking the halls at home with immediate family, staying in your P.J's, eating cinnamon buns without the hustle and bustle does have its advantages, and it definitely didn't sound so bad last year. You don't owe anything to anyone. Relax & enjoy the downtime with the ones you cherish.

Take care of yourself! Holidays before the pandemic could be hectic and stressful. This year may not be as hectic but that doesn't mean it's not stressful. COVID presents entirely new stressors, such as loneliness, and despair about the loss of holiday traditions. There are factors to making the most of the season. First, give yourself permission to feel. Disappointment, sadness, worry, anger, guilt, frustration or even grief, you are not alone, any of those emotions are natural and normal this year. Don't beat yourself up if you're not feeling jolly and bright. Second, try to alter your expectations. The holidays might not look like what were used to, but you can still find ways to show the love and spread the joy. Begin with yourself, ask yourself, "what means the most to me this time of year?". The answer probably isn't a perfectly trimmed turkey or department store gift wrapping. Give yourself permission to envision a different kind of holiday season.

"Zoomolidays" While I can't take credit for making this one up, it can be meaningful to see loved ones gather around their respective screen's and festive tables for the holidays. At this point, no one should be a stranger to zoom. It's practically our scapegoat to the outside world, and there's been no shortage of info on how to turn something that was once in

person into a zoom party. Connect with friends and loved ones who don't live with you via a Zoomoliday! Grab your list and check it twice, it's time to plan the perfect virtual holiday party. Each family can use zoom to share virtual dinners. You can spice things up with fun contests, like "most creative table setting", "most festive decorations", "best dressed, in lounge wear" of course, "ugly holiday sweater contest", "best recipe", "best holiday zoom background". While you eat dinner simultaneously, share stories of holidays past and your hopes for the future. Cheers to 2021. Why not Include some games.

Name that holiday tune. A seasonal twist on a classic game, either create your own holiday playlist or select a one from your preferred music streaming platform. Those who can correctly guess the most tunes can choose the next activity!

Card Exchange. Exchange the gift of kind words with this activity. Have your guests anonymously draw a name before the party and set aside a little time to allow everyone to write out a virtual Christmas greeting to their recipient.

Never Have I Ever: Holiday Edition, here's a game that I'm sure we're all happy has been flipped for the holidays. Have you ever regifted a gift? If so, from whom... and who did you give it to?...

Holiday Trivia. Fun and educational.

Did you know that mistletoe is a parasitic plant? (kind of makes you think twice about kissing under it).

What made Frosty the Snowman come to life?

True or false: The song "Jingle Bells" was written specifically for Christmas?

When was Christmas declared a national holiday?

How many days of Kwanzaa are there?

Do more Canadian's get real or artificial trees?

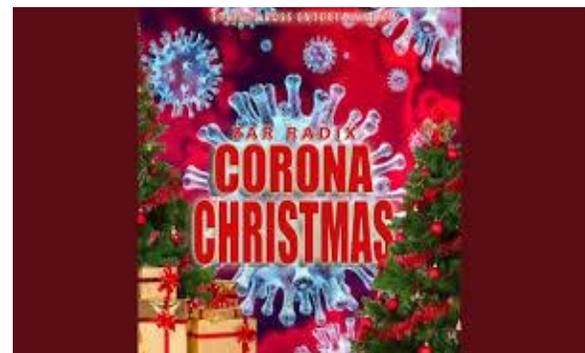
Search the link below for more holiday trivia game idea's:

<https://www.bustle.com/life/holiday-trivia-questions-zoom-parties>

With a positive attitude, some technical know-how, and a bit of creativity, you can probably

have the best socially distanced Zoomoliday you've ever had, all from the comfort of everyone's own home!

For the sake of the people you love, as well as the most vulnerable in your community, do NOT think of Christmas, Hanukkah, or any other upcoming holiday as your get-out-of-jail-free card. This holiday season, everyone will need to rethink what truly matters about holiday gatherings, or rather, what exactly it is we love about them. Practice gratitude. Gratitude is a major focus this time of year, and while it may seem harder to find things to appreciate, there is still so much to be thankful for. Make a responsive effort to regularly practice gratitude. Aim to be present in the moment. Look for things you are grateful for. It can be something as expansive as your family's health or as specific as your favorite holiday song playing in the background, or the sound of joy when your loved one sees your face on the screen. A pandemic can't stop you from showing gratitude, sharing love, and just getting plain weird with friends and family over zoom.



We have all had a tough year. While this holiday season is likely more memorable in ways that we never could have imagined, the reality is the pandemic is not abating any time soon, even with vaccines and improved medical treatments on the horizon. Don't beat yourself up over things you can't control. Do the best you can to the best of your ability and give yourself credit for making it through. The better news is the promise in looking forward to a more normal holiday season in 2021. Until then, please stay safe. Wishing each of you a wonderful and healthful holiday season.

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