

Five Ways to Take Care of Yourself and Connect with Others this Holiday Season

The holidays can be an emotionally charged time. You may have mixed feelings that may include stress, grief, and loneliness as well as feelings of joy, gratitude and hope for the new year — sometimes all at the same time. This year has been filled with new and significant challenges, and for those who celebrate, the holidays may look and feel different this year. That's why it's especially important to engage in activities and practices that make you feel your best, and to connect with others in ways that you can. And remember - while holidays are often about friends and family, it's always important to take care of yourself.

1 Create or maintain traditions virtually:

If it feels right, try to maintain some of the same traditions you have had in the past. You might not be in the same place as friends and family, but you can still decorate, watch holiday movies, play games or attend religious services together virtually. It's also important to acknowledge that this isn't a normal holiday season, and it's okay if your celebrations feel different, too. This could be a good time to create completely new traditions, and an opportunity to include family members who are typically unable to gather together because of distance.

2 Share virtual experiences:

During the holidays, experiences can be shared virtually. Eat a meal with loved ones - or even cook together - over the phone or video chat. Many people also enjoy the music and sounds of the holidays, so making a playlist for your virtual festivities is a way to share an experience and feel connected.

3 Send physical cards:

Send a physical card for the holidays to stay in touch with folks that you can't be with, and let them know that you are thinking of them. Accompanied with a handwritten note, a card can make these times special for those who may not actually be able to spend the holidays with you, physically or virtually.

4 Find a creative way to give back:

For many, giving back is a core part of the holiday season and there are still a number of ways to safely volunteer your time and resources. Write cards or [make calls](#) to isolated seniors, contribute to food pantries, donate to charities, [give much-needed blood](#), support local businesses, foster a pet, and more. [DoSomething](#) has compiled a list of virtual volunteer opportunities with organizations like the United Nations and Amnesty International. [NY Cares](#) also has several volunteer opportunities that can be done safely and virtually.

5 Make space to grieve or honor someone you lost:

This holiday season is especially challenging given that so many of us have experienced loss and have been unable to mourn in the ways to which we are accustomed. While everyone copes with loss differently, including children and adults, the following are a few ideas on ways to cope:

- 1) Find a way to incorporate lost loved ones into the festivities, by cooking one of their favorite meals or playing their favorite songs;
- 2) Be kind to yourself as you take on the additional stress of the holidays, while navigating your grief; and
- 3) Ask for help if you need it, whether from friends and family, or from a mental health professional.

If you need help and support or someone to talk to over the holidays you can reach out to NYC Well (nyc.gov/nycwell) for free, confidential, support in 200+ languages 24/7/365. Text WELL to 65173 or call NYC Well at 1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355).