



Holiday Traditions during COVID

Creating new holiday traditions for you and your family

Susan Damico, M.A.

Traditionally, the holidays are a time for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the season and make lasting memories.

While this year's festivities may look a bit different due to COVID-19, Devereux Center for Resilient Children Director **Susan Damico** says that doesn't have to stop you and your family from finding creative ways to make the season special.

"The holidays are all about traditions, and just thinking about some of those rituals can elicit feelings of happiness, peace and joy," Damico explained. "Whatever holidays you and your family celebrate, focus on what you *can* do, rather than what you *cannot* do. You may not be able to bake cookies or pies in-person with family or friends, but you can bake together on video chat. You may not be able to open presents in the same room as your loved ones, but you can open them together virtually. Remember, it's OK to feel sad, disappointed, or even angry. But instead of dwelling on the problem, try to find a solution that works for everyone."

Food for thought: Go virtual

Whether you are bringing to life a treasured family recipe that has been handed down through generations, or participating in a neighborhood cookie exchange, many families have holiday traditions that center around food. Damico suggests carrying on those rituals, but in a new way, to keep your loved ones safe and healthy.

“Take advantage of technology,” Damico said. “Ask siblings, parents and grandparents to recreate the same family recipes over Zoom or FaceTime and share stories about why those delicious dishes are so special. Instead of inviting neighbors to your house for a cookie swap, hold a virtual cookie baking day with each participant baking and decorating in their respective kitchens. Then, share the cookies via a ‘contactless’ doorstep delivery.”



Treasuring time together

Since this year’s holiday dinner table may include the same guests as every other night of the week, Damico offers ways to make the meal memorable for those in your household.

“Focus on the people seated around the table, and take a few moments to truly enjoy each other’s company,” Damico shared. “Ask family members to share one thing they most appreciate about each person. And since laughter is good for the soul, ask family members to come prepared with jokes. By the time dinner is done, everyone will feel happier – and more connected.”

“Laughter is good for the soul.”



Focus on the gift of giving

The holidays are a time for giving, and Damico encourages parents to teach children the importance of giving back to the community.

“Show your child there is more joy in giving than receiving,” Damico noted. “Help them make holiday cards for healthcare workers and first responders who are on the front lines in the fight against COVID-19. Create care packages for local homeless shelters, hospitals or nursing homes, and include handwritten notes from your child. These small gestures can have a big impact, and make the holidays a little brighter for those in need.”