



'Tis the season

We all need extra support this holiday season

2020 has been “unique” to say the least. We’ve quarantined, worked from home, worn masks, maintained social distance, home-schooled our kids and connected with friends mostly through video-chats. It hasn’t been easy!

And now it’s holiday season — a time most of us look forward to. But this year there’s an uninvited guest: COVID-19. Because of COVID, our gatherings will be smaller or postponed, fewer of our distant friends and relatives will travel and it may be a challenge to be merry. Or will it?

Making merry

“Merry” doesn’t just happen. You have to make it happen. Even if you’re feeling lonely or sad, you can still make special moments with these suggestions:

- **Be realistic.** Accept that the next few months may be tough. That way you can make plans now to:
 - Schedule some holiday celebrations by using video chat platforms and partying virtually.
 - Get creative and start some new traditions that are COVID-safe.

- **Be gentle with yourself.** If you feel sad or lonely, let yourself feel those emotions for a while. Know that this is a hard time of year for many people. Then try to get busy. A new project, book or other activity can help boost your mood.
- **De-stress.** How do you manage your stress? Try exercising, making decorations and holiday cards, meditating, connecting over video platforms, watching holiday-themed movies and more. Be careful to avoid misuse of alcohol and other substances to soothe yourself. They can make you feel more depressed.
- **Ask for support and take it.** Now's a good time to use your support system. Do you have friends who are good listeners? Give one of them a call to talk about your stress. Feeling lonely? Call a friend for a socially distanced lunch or dinner.
- **Volunteer.** Find ways you can volunteer in your area. Helping others can reduce feelings of sadness. You might deliver meals or holiday treats to doorsteps or pick up groceries and medications for people who can't get out. If you like to sing or play an instrument, you could even offer to do some virtual entertaining for a local nursing home.
- **Let go of expectations.** Give yourself a break. It's okay if you don't feel like decorating this year. And with so many people feeling financial stress, consider spending less on gifts. Don't want to go out shopping? Buy presents or gift cards online instead. Being practical and staying safe are the most important considerations this year.
- **Get professional support.** Support from a mental health expert during the holidays can really help. And if sad or lonely feelings stay beyond the holidays, follow up. Skilled professionals can work with you to deal with depression, anxiety, grief or any other troubling feelings you may have. Reach out.
- **Look forward to the new year.** COVID will impact holidays this year — and there's not much we can do about it. But try setting your sites on next year, when, hopefully, we'll be well on track to health, happiness and holidays as usual.

Be extra kind and understanding with yourself and those around you this year. And let us help you through this season. You can call us 24/7 for in-the-moment support over the phone or by video chat.

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law. Information is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a professional. Contact a professional with any questions about specific needs. EAP instructors, educators and participating providers are independent contractors and are not agents of Resources For Living. Provider participation may change without notice.