Surviving Holidays During COVID Pandemic Times
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The holidays can be hard for autistic people in the best of times due to overwhelming sensory experiences and changes in routine. Finding ways to cope and thrive during these stressful times is really not a new experience for a lot of autistic people.

Now, the COVID-19 pandemic brings a whole new set of challenges to the 2020 holiday season for all of us regardless of neurotype. Some of us might actually enjoy the fact that the pressure is off to celebrate and socialize in traditional ways. Those of us who are estranged from family or who dislike this time of year might actually be feeling a sense of relief that holiday gatherings are discouraged due to the pandemic. And some of us might be feeling more lonely and isolated at a time when we hear so many messages encouraging "family" and "togetherness." All of these reactions are valid and normal!

The need to feel and be safe

Your concern for other family and friends

This is only temporary

Exploring alternative ways to observe important holidays together

If the people who you are normally expected to celebrate with are dismissive of your fears about large gatherings right now, you might want to come up with a script to help you set boundaries. This can include things like:

- Make a list of what you won't miss. Loud noises, weird gelatin-based desserts, obnoxious flashing lights, crowds, shopping, that one holiday song that actually makes you angry…there's a lot of things that we won't miss this holiday season and humor is a great coping mechanism. Make a list of the things that you are not sad to miss out on this time of year!

- Do your favorite things. Watch a movie you love for the hundredth time, listen to music that makes you happy, watch cat videos, make a craft or write a poem, play a game or do the things that you love the most just because you deserve it!

- Do your Holiday Activity

- Make a List of What You Won't Miss

- The number one thing to remember is that the pandemic will not last forever. It feels really strange right now, but it's important to keep reminding ourselves that this is just temporary. We are doing our best to stay safe and to keep others safe, and that is always a good thing.

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