

# 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.

meow.



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!

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:

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 you are looking forward to the holidays and spending time with family, it's okay to feel sad even if you know that you are abstaining from large gatherings for good reason. The great news is that there are some inventive and imaginative ways to be together, even when we are not in the same physical space.



As autistic people, we already have an overwhelming advantage in being creative to get what we need in a world that is not set up for our neurology. We can use that to find ways to cope and manage right now, even if they are very different from what is expected.

Some ideas for "virtual" gatherings & tips to get us through the holidays:

### Virtual Pot Luck / Holiday Info Dump



Organize a video chat where instead of a food pot luck, everyone can share a picture, special item or holiday memory, or talk about their favorite thing or share a skill with each other.

### Stream a Holiday Movie Together

Facebook Messenger allows the option of watching a movie together. Organize a group chat and find a holiday favorite to watch together.



### Virtual Bake-Off

Baking is an important part of the holidays for many people. Organize a time to meet virtually with family or friends and bake together or exchange recipes with each other.

### Virtual Holiday Activity

Do a holiday activity together, virtually. It can be a game, painting or crafting together, going on a virtual vacation and watching youtube footage of all the places in the world you'd love to explore.



### 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!



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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