

HOLIDAYS and CAREGIVING

The holidays can be a time of mixed emotions and extra stress for caregivers. There are happy celebrations, special traditions, and wonderful memories. But there can also be unpleasant family members, grief for those who have passed, and an overwhelming To Do list.

And this year, the coronavirus pandemic has made the holidays extra stressful and challenging. We might have to skip traditional gatherings, family members may argue about safety precautions, and there might be fresh grief from recent losses of family or friends. Here, we've rounded up useful and realistic tips that help you care for yourself and find some joy this holiday season. Be sure to click on the links for more helpful information.

Make time for yourself

It's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of extra tasks and hassles that the holidays bring. Added on top of regular caregiving responsibilities, it can really amp up the stress. To counter that, make it a priority to take a [little time for yourself](#) to sit quietly, relax, and recharge.

Know your priorities

There are dozens of things going on during the holidays, but it's impossible to do everything without running yourself ragged. So, take a moment to consider – which are the most important to you?

Make room for grief if you're missing someone who has passed away

The holidays can be tough when you're missing someone important to you. Consider setting a place at the table, having a moment of silence, or sharing favorite memories as a way to honor them. If you're feeling sad, remind yourself that it's completely natural and that you don't have to pretend to be cheerful. Give yourself permission to feel your emotions as they are and don't feel obligated to participate in activities if the emotions are too overwhelming.

Reflect on what you're grateful for

Practicing gratitude is a [proven stress-buster](#). It changes your perspective and helps you see that there is always some good in life, even in tough times.

Find reasons to laugh

Humor is a fantastic stress reducer and an effective way of [coping with challenging situations](#). If funny things don't come up naturally, watch a funny movie or show or do something silly like play charades or have a fun sing-a-long.

Take your traditions virtual

[Virtual connections](#) can go beyond a short conversation. Do you sing carols, bake, create crafts, or watch It's a Wonderful Life every year? You can do these things from a distance thanks to video chat apps like FaceTime, Zoom and Skype.

You might set up a phone or tablet on a tripod so you can see each other and bake, create crafts, feast, play charades or trivia, or engage in other holiday traditions.

Start new traditions

It can be helpful to focus forward instead of on the past. Make this a year to create new holiday rituals. Perhaps you could:

- make homemade gifts
- meet for a walk outside
- cook the same recipes from a distance and compare
- read to kids or grandkids via video calls
- call each other while you have your first holiday morning cup of coffee
- Write and mail holiday cards.
- Set aside time to share memories of holidays past

Some of your holiday adaptations this year will likely become new traditions. Those old family traditions had to start somewhere, right? Daunting as it might seem to make the holidays memorable this year for something other than their difference, in future years we may look back and marvel at how creative we were...