

Pandemic disappointment and healthy coping strategies for this 2020 holiday season

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We are all feeling many levels of disappointment this holiday season due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the steps we are taking as a society to slow its spread. How do we cope with these feelings in healthy ways? Here are some healthy coping strategies:

- **Acknowledge the feelings of hurt, disappointment, sadness, worry and anger**
The more we try to minimize or push away emotions that do not feel good, the more they weigh us down. Over time, unresolved feelings will impact how we cope with other stressors, how we feel about ourselves and how we interact in our relationships.
- **Notice negative self-talk**
Such as “I shouldn’t be so upset over cancelled plans.”
Replace it with “I have the right to feel upset and I’m going to find a productive way to feel better.”
- **Seek support**
Connect with loved ones via a phone call, video call, text, email or a hand-written card or letter. Let people close to you know if you are struggling.
- **Maintain a daily routine**
Keep structured sleep/wake times. Be mindful of stress eating and minimize overeating, sugar and alcohol. Spend time outside that involves movement. Minimize screen time.
- **Practice acceptance**
Accept this reality **is** our reality. We might not like it, want it or embrace it. Focus less on what you can’t do and more on what you can. When you find your mind ruminating over thoughts such as “why is this happening? This isn’t fair.” Create a coping statement that feels right for you. For example: “I will get through this the best I can.”
- **Look forward**
Keep a gratitude journal and jot down daily things for which you are grateful, no matter how small they seem. Create a list of activities that can be rescheduled with open ended dates. Consider ways to celebrate using technology – a virtual tree trimming. Virtual cookie baking. Virtual holiday meals. Perhaps even a virtual present opening. Dress up in the clothes you would be wearing if you were going out. Feel “as if” and you will be fully present in the celebration.
- **Pay attention to your loved ones**
Give them the gift of your full attention. Listen without comparison or trying to make it about you. Notice if they may need professional support. Remember to utilize your virtual tele health benefits if needed.

In summary, Home is where the heart is – in 2020 it has also been the classroom, the office, and the gym. This quarantine has forced us all to look at the totality of our lives and find the holes. It has also highlighted the fact that humans are social creatures, allowing us to celebrate and honor the gifts that our larger communities give us. As well as recognize who and what we may have taken for granted prior to the pandemic. May you find light and hope in these turbulent times. You are needed and appreciated. Never underestimate the gifts you bring to each day just by being you. Happy, Healthy Holidays!!