

## TIPS TO RETHINK AND RESHAPE YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

The 2020 holidays are shaping up to be different with less onsite shopping, smaller get-togethers and limited social activity. Rather than focus on restrictions or what you can't do, get creative. Rethink and reshape your endeavors and festivities to fit the times. It's one year. Staying safe and healthy this season will allow for more reunions and celebrations in the future.

Consider what brings you the most joy during the holidays. For me, I like taking a break from work and typical activities to connect with family and friends, prepare favorite seasonal foods, listen to holiday music and watch favorite movies, spend time in a warm and cozy home, find unique gifts that loved ones might enjoy, spend time outdoors. I'll miss the hustle and bustle of the season, our local craft shows and fairs, holiday concerts, and spending time together with family and friends.

This year, we'll keep our bubble small. Our daughter came home at the end of October and will stay through New Year's. We're a bubble of three and it will stay this way this year. We're planning to cut down our Christmas tree. We haven't done this in many years. It'll be a nice change of pace. Since our tree will be very fresh, we can leave it up longer and then put it outside for the birds to enjoy.

I enjoy sending cards. I take time to write a personal note in each card. It's a great way to connect with people I haven't been in touch with for a while. Although I never feel pressured to get all the cards in the mail before Christmas, I usually do them early in the month. In recent years, I've noticed more cards arriving early in the new year as New Year cards. I like this. Friends who have sent these cards value the importance of writing and sending cards when they are feeling good vs. crunched for time. It makes a difference. I feel it in the energy of each card. If you don't enjoy sending cards, don't send them. There are eight days of Chanukah and 12 days of Christmas. It's OK to take your time and stretch things out.

We're going to make some special holiday treats and will mail some to family and friends. We'll also connect with people via phone, facetime and Zoom. Many people are tired of spending a lot of time on the computer. It's understandable. For them, a phone call works better. We also might meet with a few friends in outdoor settings.

Compassion, empathy, and a deeper understanding of what others are going through is needed too. Many people, old and young, will be spending the holidays alone. I'll reach out to those I know. If you have such people in your life, consider doing the same. My daughter sent some special treats to a friend who is spending the holidays alone in NYC.

Do you have an elderly neighbor or a friend who has faced illness or loss this year? If so, consider ways you can reach out and connect with them. If close by, you might drop off a meal, a treat, or perhaps a book or a puzzle. If they are long distance, call and chat, send a card, send flowers or a potted plant, or a package with a thoughtful gift.

You might even send a meal or a gift card from a local restaurant.

There's also a lot of quality programming that can help you to better understand yourself and others. Two programs I find insightful and worth listening to are The Hidden Brain and On Being. You'll find both on NPR and hours of listening on the web. The Hidden Brain explores patterns that drive human behavior and On Being explores spiritual and moral questions. Both programs offer ways to reach out to others in rich and meaningful ways. Both delve into the deeper world of human behavior and cover the topics of the day. Check them out if you're interested.

I've updated last year's tips help you make the most of your holidays:

**1. Keep your social bubble small this year, yet also reach out to those who are alone or those who have been going through hard times. Let others know you care, even though you can't get together. Chat on the phone, connect in real time via Zoom, Facetime, or another service, write a card. Create new traditions.**

**2. Have alternatives and send packages early. Product inventory might be low. There's already a shortage of chess boards due to the popularity of The Queen's Gambit (a popular Netflix series). Also, allow extra shipping time. Doing so will help reduce stress and avoid disappointment. Send a gift of fresh flowers or a potted plant to someone spending the holidays alone.**

**3. Eat a variety of fresh, healthy food. Keep your immune system strong. Eat all colors of the rainbow. Exchange ideas and recipes with friends. Prepare new foods. With fewer people, there's less stress if the dish turns out different than expected. Also include your favorites and indulge without overdoing.**

**4. Spend time outdoors. It's healthy, a great way to get some exercise, and an acceptable way to meet with friends. Keep your groups small and enjoy time together.**

**5. Clean your space. You'll uplift the energy and things will feel much better. Use natural cleaning products, rather than ones with chemical additives or artificial fragrances.**

**6. Put away things that you're not using. This comes under the category of "give everything a home." When too much is left out in the open, a space can feel overwhelming.**

**7. Eliminate piles growing from the floor up. They're associated with depression and can drag your energy down. Toss out catalogs you don't enjoy or purchase from; they pile up fast.**

**8. If you decorate, put away at least one thing for every item that you add. To make things easy, store them in the same container or box that you're taking out.**

**That way they're easy to find when you're ready to display them again.**

**9. Review your holiday décor as you unpack it and display it. If any item no longer brings you joy, let it go. Pass it along to someone else, donate it, or sell it. If it's broken and you want to keep it, repair it. If it's beyond repair, toss it out.**

**10. A fresh Christmas tree, wreath, a fresh poinsettia, fresh evergreens, or flowers bring in fragrance, color and a higher quality of chi and lifeforce. At the end of the season you won't have to store them either.**

**11. Lights are a wonderful way to shift the energy of spaces. They bring a smile to many faces during the dark days of winter. This year, put your lights up early and light them throughout the dark winter nights.**

**12. Angels, stars, glittery baubles, and other assorted ornaments bring joy. Even if you don't put up a tree, display some of your favorite seasonal objects.**

Even though things are different this year, there are many ways to find joy and to help others do the same. Focus on what's in your control, bring some holiday cheer to at least one other person, and let go of the rest. You'll be happier and healthier as a result.