

## Holidays in the Time of COVID-19

*How can families deal with the challenges of Covid during the holiday season when the number of cases has spiked up around the nation.*

UNITED STATES, November 22, 2020  
/EINPresswire.com/ --  
DEALING WITH DOUBLE TROUBLE:

The stresses of Covid including job loss, home schooling, financial strain and restriction of outside activities has strained marriage and families. Requests for legal papers for divorce increased by 34 percent between March and June, 2020 according to Legal Templates service. The Holidays will be challenging this year. Google searches on topics related to anxiety have jumped 52% during the pandemic.



How can families deal with the challenges of Covid during the holiday season when the number of cases has spiked up around the nation. How can families remain safe and still celebrate

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*Dr. Linda Miles*

holiday traditions? Of course, masks should be worn when going outside, hands washed often and gatherings need to be small. According to scientists by next Thanksgiving we should be able to have our usual huge gatherings of relatives and friends. The Chinese have a character for crisis that is a combination of the word danger and opportunity. This year brings unique opportunities to practice strategies such as mindfulness to stay internally calm despite external stressors. Mindfulness is a science-based practice using deep breathing and focus on a

present moment. I am working with a family with three young children and two parents who are working from home. We have made plans for them to have virtual gatherings and create new

traditions using art and creativity for the children. In addition, they are planning some dates to include safe venues such as outside at a restaurant or visits to nature preserves. I gave the couple a guide for mindfulness practices to tame their inner storms before they explode into verbal attacks on one another or the children.

What mindfulness practices help families share special moments of the holidays in the midst of challenges of the virus?

## MINDFULNESS METHODS TO DEAL WITH DOUBLE TROUBLE OF HOLIDAYS IN THE TIME OF COVID

1. By mindfully living in the present, you can make the conscious decision to focus your resources and time on positive emotions of joy, appreciation, and healing. This does not mean that you're denying the reality of inconveniences or suffering that may affect you, your family, or community. Instead, it means that you actively choose to find moments during the day to share and partake in kindness, gratitude, and joy.
2. Eric Kandel, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Medicine, notes that the ability to rejoice is not something that we are born with or that we lack; it's something that should be cultivated constantly. He has observed that we can train our brains to resist harmful gut reactions and strengthen our ability to focus on positive aspects and feelings that serve us and those around us.
3. When you feel overwhelmed by the negative emotions about coronavirus or any other anxiety-producing event, you can practice mindfulness techniques to evoke calmness and healing. Imagine that you inhale sparks of goodness and healing, and that you breathe out some of that light and healing to others. When you notice tension building up in your body, breathe deeply and fill your body with clean air and thoughts. Envision a healing light that can penetrate your muscles and soothe them.

## MINDFUL REMINDERS

Accept reality. It does not help to deny what is happening.

The challenge of coronavirus is an opportunity to come become better instead of bitter. Take it one day at a time. You do not know the future. Give your best today.

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- The challenge of coronavirus is also an opportunity to become better and to help others.
- Do not torment yourself out of fear that you will be tormented by coronavirus complications; wasteful worrying will not change the present or future.
- Realize that gratitude and expression of appreciation are not just for good times; it is healing in troublesome times.
- You cannot avoid suffering, but you can intentionally look for joy amidst suffering.
- Inhale and think the word "Be"; think the word "Calm" as you exhale.

Now is a good time to practice choosing peace of mind instead of fear. Life can feel very different if your heart is not obstructed by fear.

- Joseph Campbell said that one of the most important lessons is to "find joy amidst suffering."
- Emotions are contagious, so ignite your own inner light.
- Approach this situation as an experiment in staying in the present moment.
- Notice the stories you tell yourself about what might happen, and realize that those are only stories.
- Make your life be a benefit to others.
- "Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy." -Anne Frank

Joy does not imply never-ending happiness. It is the ability and choice to rejoice. All emotions are temporary.

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