



The Wellness Wire

Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

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An initiative of the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee, the Office of Medical Student Support Services, the Fit & Well Committee, the Assistant Dean of Faculty Development, and the Division of Education and Faculty Development in the Department of Humanities, Health, and Society.

Greetings as we all learn to reframe our lives during these unprecedented times. Recognizing that figuring out our work and home lives during a pandemic can be challenging, the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee has launched this initiative to provide resources for faculty and staff to foster our collective well-being.

Editor: Greg Schneider, MD

Finding Wholeness in the Holidays

In a year filled with absences, adaptations, and adjustments, sometimes it is difficult to even imagine planning for the holidays. Should I travel? Should we have people over for dinner? Does it even make sense to go to an airport? In our lifetimes, most of us likely never used the words “super-spreader event” before, much less in relation to Thanksgiving. We may crave the end-of-year holidays or we may dread them (or both), but they tap into something deep in all of us as we reflect on a year gone by and contemplate the year to come.

The word “holiday” connotes “holy day” and thus suggests the sacred, but its roots are even more basic. The Old English ‘hal’ means complete, healthy, uninjured, and sound. I suspect that the reason every known culture and society has some kind of holiday stems from the fact that individually and collectively, we seek a time to restore and celebrate wholeness. We yearn for those people and patterns that make our lives healthy and complete.

Approaching that wholeness in a year defined by a pandemic, and in many places including the United States by fracture and division, emerges as a challenge. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of the year may in fact provide an opportunity. Rather than focusing on what cannot have or cannot do, we have a chance to consider those people, places, and events that we do have and treasure. We just might have to imagine new ways of discovering and honoring those treasures.

We can start by acknowledging that the year is different; it just is. “It’s 2020” has even become an expression. In this distinctive year, we can reflect on what the holidays mean to us and create distinctive new ways to celebrate that meaning. Dinner might be on Zoom, but for many it’s the people on the screen that we care about, not primarily the table setting. “But I like to decorate,” you retort. “Decorating shows my creative side; it’s how I do something for others.” Great, how then can you channel that creativity in new ways? Meanwhile, know your limits and let people know your boundaries. If the thought of travel scares you too much, let your family know. If the thought of another Zoom meeting gives you hives, let your friends know. If you are getting overwhelmed, seek help. When possible, think about the unexpected gifts that 2020 has brought you. “It’s 2020” doesn’t have to only mean something bad.

Perhaps most importantly, think about what gives you and those you care about joy. How can you express that joy, even if in a new format or a new technology? Striving for wholeness this year may look different, but it’s still an ever-present possibility.

Don’t forget about our interactive [Wellness Wall](#).



Resources and Reflections for Navigating the Holidays

Editor: Suzanne Minor, MD

The urge to connect is powerful and appropriate, especially after the challenging year we've faced with this pandemic. Even though I would have loved to travel this Thanksgiving, I'm so grateful for travelling last year and that there's hope in our future with efficacious vaccines on the way! I still was able to connect with loved ones over the holiday through... you guessed it – Zoom! Even though we cannot connect in usual ways, we can still connect through virtual technology. [This MIT Technology Review article](#) talks about using virtual platforms as well as what to do while on those platforms. When we are connecting remotely, we may want to get creative about our focus and activities. The article also talks about how to help the conversation flow while on zoom, recommending a group activity or having a few open-ended questions ready that can start conversation. Something new for me this Thanksgiving was to play online games through jackbox, which the article talks about. It was a lot of fun and allowed friends to laugh together across 4 states!

[This article](#) from Psychology Today highlights ten tips to help you manage your wellbeing during this holiday season occurring during the coronavirus pandemic.

Farewelling is a website that facilitates memorials and saying goodbye to loved ones. [This article](#) approaches finding joy during the pandemic through the lens of loss of a loved one, acknowledging that dealing with loss during a holiday season in which gathering with one's loved ones may not be possible. It offers thirteen ideas for finding happiness and gratitude including acknowledging loss, purposeful self-care, spotlighting silver linings, reaching out to others, and being in nature.

For some of us, the holidays can be more stressful. [This article from the Mayo Clinic](#) has useful, concrete tips for coping with the holidays to help prevent stress and depression and to take control during the holiday season.

[This article](#) from Johns Hopkins offers four tips to de-stress during the holidays. My favorite tip here is to accept imperfection!

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[The CDC website](#) has a lot of details about the logistics of staying safe while celebrating the holidays. Are indoor or outdoor gatherings safer? Outdoor! If outdoor and we aren't eating, should we still wear masks? Yes! What's the safest way to deal with food? Better to encourage guests to bring their own food and drink rather than a potluck-style gathering. By knowing how to be safe, you may be able to feel secure in seeking out and finding joy.

Happy Holidays and a Hopeful New Year!

