

## **Managing the Holidays During COVID-19**

It is no secret that COVID-19 has greatly impacted how we interact with one another this year. Limiting our time away from home, practicing social distancing and wearing masks has greatly impacted our ability to socialize. With the holiday season upon us, families are now struggling with how to approach the holidays – weighing the safety of travel and gathering with the desire to spend time with loved ones. This year, many families are choosing to host virtual celebrations with friends and family, vs. in-person events.

Planning for a virtual holiday celebration is just like planning for an in-person event. The sooner you start, the better. Begin by deciding what format to use. This will be determined by what devices are currently being used by your family and friends, as well as what programs individuals are comfortable using. Facebook, Facebook Live, Skype, FaceTime and Zoom are excellent ways to host your virtual celebration.

The key to a successful event, however, is making sure that everyone is comfortable using the technology selected. Have a practice session in advance to answer any questions friends and family might have. This will eliminate or greatly reduce the stress of trying to learn new technology in the middle of your celebration. Seniorplanet.org is a nonprofit that offers free videos and classes for seniors to learn technology. AARP and seniorsguide.com also have excellent resources for learning new technology.

If you have a family member who does not currently have a device, consider loaning an extra device to that individual for the celebration, or consider pooling family resources to purchase a joint gift so you can keep in touch with your loved one throughout the year.

Just as you would with an in-person event, identify one or two family members who can serve as the point persons to coordinate the details and logistics of the virtual event. Create a line-up of fun and entertaining activities. You can have one virtual celebration, or an entire series of activities spread out over several days.

Cook favorite dishes together virtually in the days leading up to the holiday. This is a great way to pass along “secret” family recipes! Have a friendly competition while decorating cookies or creating gingerbread houses.

Many games can also be changed to a virtual format. Have a gift wrapping race, ugly sweater contest or name that tune with your favorite holiday song. Traditional games such as Yahtzee, Pictionary and Scattergories can be played virtually. Get the kids involved with an alphabet challenge or a game of bingo. You can close out your time together doing some “couch caroling” to lift everyone’s spirits.

The most important thing you can do is focus on the celebration – however it looks this year. Spending time with friends and family, even virtually, is good for our health and well-being no matter the format!

*For more information about family resource management or adult development and aging, contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to [kgoul@ksu.edu](mailto:kgoul@ksu.edu) or check out our website: [www.maraisdescyignes.k-state.edu](http://www.maraisdescyignes.k-state.edu).*