

# How parents can help kids navigate holiday disappointment during COVID-19

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By this point in the COVID-19 pandemic, many children have experienced disappointment about missing out on birthday parties, family vacations or special occasions they had been looking forward to. If your child or teen feels disappointed right now over missed holiday celebrations, let her express her feelings, and validate them. Share your own disappointments and how you are managing your feelings.

As a parent, it is difficult to see your child experience disappointment. As adults, we have the perspective of knowing that there will be other holiday seasons in their future. During this time, children will be most comforted by parents' words of reassurance that you will get through these challenging times together, and that life will return to normal eventually.

## Remind children why things have changed

It can be helpful to remind them about why things are different right now. Remind your child that as a community, we are all doing our part to curb the spread of COVID-19.

## Discuss changes in plans earlier vs. later

For most young children, it will be helpful to start to discuss changes in plans earlier than later. Start slow and return to the topic several times, each time adding a little more detail. Ask for your children's input on how they would like to spend the holidays given the stay-at-home order and how they might celebrate with loved ones who they cannot see in person. For example, they can help you bake your favorite holiday recipe to drop off on someone's doorstep or create a special holiday craft to mail to a loved one who lives far away.

## Limit children's exposure to the news

At this point, all but very young children are clear that something has drastically changed in their world. While it is important to keep very young children away from the daily news which can include death tolls and speculations, parents should be honest about what we are trying to accomplish by social distancing. [Here's an explanation of social distancing](#). It could be helpful to ask them what they already know, debunk misinformation, and provide additional information for better understanding and clarification.



## Let them use their imagination

Have fun thinking about what makeup holiday celebrations and other gatherings with family and friends would look like. Let them use their imaginations on what decorations they would have, food they would eat and people they most want to see.

## Celebrate special events in a creative way:

- Use technology such as FaceTime, Zoom or Skype to enjoy a holiday meal with loved ones who don't live in your household. Consider sharing recipes between family members and friends ahead of time and cooking your meals together over video chat.
- Host a virtual party — decorate a backdrop, make a music playlist and create a themed game.
- Join friends for a virtual cookie or gingerbread house decorating party.
- Have a virtual, interactive watch party for your favorite holiday movie using Netflix Party or Disney +’s GroupWatch. These services allow you to synchronize your show or movie with friends and family, and chat while you’re watching.
- If your traditional outings during the holiday season aren’t an option due to COVID-19, consider planning a virtual field trip and inviting families from other households. Many museums and other attractions are offering free virtual visits during this time.
- Help your child prepare a special meal or dessert for the holiday or special day.
- Go into nature for a scavenger hunt or take a drive through a holiday light display.
- Organize a Zoom or Skype call with family and friends to sing your favorite holiday songs.

## Building resiliency

Although this pandemic is not the situation that we would have chosen for our kids to face, experiencing adverse events, with their parent’s support, will help kids build resiliency. They will be able to look back on this time and reflect on how they were creative in finding ways to celebrate holidays and how they found new ways to entertain themselves at home, while persevering over new challenges.

<https://blog.chocchildrens.org/how-parents-can-help-kids-navigate-holiday-disappointment-during-covid-19/>

