

45 NEW FAMILY HOLIDAY TRADITIONS FOR 2020




Keep Traditions Alive (Even Virtually)

- Choose a holiday theme for virtual family get-togethers like an ugly sweater contest or matching holiday pajamas.
- Build a virtual party around a randomly chosen year in the past. What foods were made? What music was played? What did children do for fun? Bonus credit for dressing in time-appropriate costumes.
- Research and celebrate your family's background. Make traditional foods, listen to traditional music, learn a few phrases in the native tongue. Bring out any photos and help children connect with their ancestors.
- Play online trivia games with family members, and don't forget prizes for the winners!
- Plan a virtual movie night party with costumes, snacks, games, and a simultaneous viewing (Teleparty is a great way for families to watch movies together, even if they're not physically near each other).
- Have family gatherings to learn a new skill or hobby together. Get together through Zoom to craft, crochet, paint, knit, or embroider.
- Cook together via video. Have the family agree on a recipe, and everyone tries it out.
- Have Zoom awards where family far and wide are honored for their accomplishments.





Create Opportunities for Closeness

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- Create a seasonal chart of events with your children to highlight dates of importance for your family.
 - Document holidays, events, and when favorite seasonal TV specials play. Gather recipes for favorite holiday foods and drinks.
 - Make song lists for holiday music.
 - Bake a batch of everyone's favorite holiday treats together (bonus points if you sing along to holiday music).
 - Set up a hot cocoa bar with lots of fun options for toppings, like marshmallows, crumbles cookies, and candy cane pieces. Don't forget the whipped cream!
 - Give the cook a night off and enjoy breakfast for dinner — maybe even more than once!
 - Have the family do group meditation or group yoga a few nights a week, focusing on mindfulness and calm.
 - Take some time weekly as a family to discuss goals for the new year.
 - Create a "good memories jar" on New Year's Day. Write down good things as they happen throughout the year and add them to the jar. Take turns reading them out loud the next New Year's Eve.
 - Help children think through the past year and identify where mistakes became valuable learning opportunities.
 - Have a clean-out at the beginning of December — donate toys, games, and clothes that your children have outgrown to make way for holiday gifts.
 - Make gift-giving last a little longer and increase the opportunity for appreciation by making it a present treasure hunt.
 - Have family members write what they want to leave behind for the new year on a leaf or piece of scrap paper. Use the leaves and paper as kindling in a fireplace, fire pit, or bonfire, or simply crumble up the leaves and sprinkle the pieces in the yard.
 - Put together holiday supply packages and deliver them to local women's or homeless shelters.
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Connect to Nature



- Make a family tradition of watching the leaves change. Help children document daily changes and use their senses to make observations.
- Have children draw different colored and shaped leaves they see outside.
- Have children draw trees they see around the home and neighborhood throughout the holiday season.
- Count the leaves left on a tree and note when the last leaf falls.
- Note the absence of leaves and the bareness of branches in the winter. Bring in branches to use with cuttings or as a centerpiece.
- Create wind chimes and mobiles using branches, leaves, seeds, and any other items found on walks.
- Use butcher paper or a whiteboard to make a tree with branches and roots. Each day, have children add a leaf that contains a high note for the day. Have children add their lows to the roots of the tree. Explain that our mistakes and challenges strengthen our roots to foster growth.
- Live in an area where it's still warm at the end of the year? Water balloon fights will keep every cool and is a fun way to expend some energy!
- Teach about the seasons and celebrate the yearly changes. Fall equinox and fall solstice are perfect opportunities for introducing astronomy, including the paths of the earth.



Tap Into the Holiday Senses

- Create a holiday scents game. Pick out various holiday-related spices, like cinnamon, nutmeg, pine, and cocoa. Blindfold your child and have them guess the smell (from a safe distance so there's no chance of any powder going up their nose!).
- Make some warm apple cider to drink by a fire. Help children note the differences in the chilly air and the warm drink.
- Sit outside with children and have them close their eyes and listen. What are they able to hear? Discuss all the things we can miss when we rush.
- Have children experience various textures with seasonal foods. Apples are an excellent way for children to experience crunch with a raw apple, softness with apple sauce, and liquid with apple cider.
- Enjoy the leaves' crunch factor and have children test and note the dryness of leaves by crushing them with their hands or shoes.
- Provide various blanket textures for curling up — wool, flannel, cotton, or fleece. Have children note the touch and feel of the blankets, along with their thoughts on each one's coziness factor.
- Offer holiday food at different temperatures. Have children enjoy hot chocolate one night, warm chocolate pudding the next, and then chocolate ice cream. Don't forget the marshmallows and discuss what happens to them at different temperatures.
- Use holiday scents for playdough and slime. Add some pumpkin pie spice or other spices when making, and even some holiday colors with edible dye.





Cope With The Loss

2020 has been difficult for many families, especially those who have lost someone to COVID-19. Following the recommendations given to us by a Certified Clinician Trauma Specialist specializing in early childhood education, here are several ways to help children and your family acknowledge and cope with that loss during the holidays.

- Create memory books or boxes for loved ones who passed away; make sure children have easy access to these items.
- Create art from a loved one's old clothing. A grandfather's shirt can be made into a pillow or quilt to cuddle up with when they are missed.
- Make an ancestral cookbook with family recipes and honour those who have passed by making their favourite meal. Bonus points if you eat on grandma's china or your great aunt's lace tablecloth.
- Show support to frontline workers who have given their lives fighting COVID — send current frontline workers dinner. Many eateries are offering specials that can be delivered to frontline workers.
- Dia de Los Muertos is one example of traditions that help people honour those lost and create celebrations through mourning. Help children create an altar for their losses, including lost pets.
- If your family has experienced a recent loss, it can be difficult for younger children to process. “Coco” is a family-friendly movie to help children work through the abstract concept of death.



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- V. Ramos

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- Heather C.

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