

7 Safe Ways to Celebrate Christmas That Have Nothing to Do With Zoom

Here's how to find joy this holiday season—even if coronavirus cases change your traditions.

This Christmas, it may be hard not to feel a little Grinchy. But before you say, “Bah, humbug,” and try to fast forward into the new year, look for ways to find some fun this holiday season. The coronavirus pandemic may mean your Christmas won't look exactly the same as it usually does, but you can get creative and find some new ways to celebrate—and some of your ideas may be so good you'll make some new traditions along the way.

Here's how to make your Christmas special, even if concerns about COVID-19 mean you'll have to celebrate the holidays away from your friends and family.

1

Prioritize the traditions that matter most to you

“Think about what is the essence of the holiday for you, so you can try to preserve it,” says happiness expert Gretchen Rubin, author of *Happier at Home*. “Even if you're not doing everything you used to, you can set up the holiday decorations, if that's really important, or make the special foods you love.”

2

Do your gift shopping and shipping early

Since more people will be shopping online to avoid the stores, shipping companies will be inundated—so you'll want to shop and send gifts early to make sure they arrive right on time. (Check the USPS holiday shipping deadlines to make sure you're on track.)

3

Trim a tree outdoors

Since you might be entertaining outdoors more than you usually do this time of year, this is the year to go overboard with decking out your deck or patio—and adorning an outdoor-friendly tree (or even a live Christmas tree in a planter) with LED lights and shatterproof ornaments is the way to go. (Tip: Use twist ties or florist's wire to secure the ornaments to the tree, so they'll stay put even in a stiff wind.)

Maybe Santa could even leave some of the best outdoorsy Christmas gifts of the year, such as snowshoes, skis, or sleds, at the outdoor tree, too.

4

Make special memories

Yeah, you and your household members may be a little tired of each other right now, but think of fun ways to help set the holiday season apart. Create a little advent calendar with festive activities for each day, rather than a treat. Your Christmas activities don't have to be elaborate—it could just be drinking hot cocoa together

wearing Santa hats or watching one of the best Christmas movies on Netflix—but it'll help make the season brighter.

5

Find ways to make the most of your time with loved ones

To keep everyone as safe as possible, your best bet is following [CDC](#) recommendations and avoiding indoor get-togethers. (An outbreak of COVID is the Christmas gift that no one wished for.) And that means if you live in the northern part of the country, your time together will probably need to be briefer (and chillier) than you'd probably like. Zoom fatigue is real, though: If you can, make events in-person and outdoors, even if it means a quick chat while everyone's bundled up.

When gathering in person outdoors, consider keeping celebrations to the daytime hours, when it might be a little bit warmer and more comfortable to spend time outside. Look for outdoor activities that can be socially distanced and keep you active, like sledding or snow-fort making. And don't forget to serve hot foods and drinks to help keep everyone toasty. Do your Secret Santa or white elephant gift exchange around an outdoor picnic table or fire pit; for ugly sweater competitions, strategize layering options so you can show off your light-up sweater and stay warm at the same time.

6

Spread some joy

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's how much the people in our lives mean to us, so go ahead and spread some happiness where you can. Write down how much the people you love mean to you and send it out to them. Make Christmas cookies and leave some with your friends and neighbors—or drop off pizza or other treats at a

local nursing home, hospital, or fire department to brighten the lives of the people there.

7

Remember that what's different may make this holiday more special

You may not remember exactly what happened at the holidays from year to year, but when something this different happens, it'll stick out. "Things that go wrong often make the best memories," Rubin says. "This exceptional holiday season will probably be more memorable because it's so different. We just have to find a way to make the most of it."