

It is Going to Be a Wonderful Christmas

Christmas day is just eight days away and it is going to be a wonderful Christmas. One thing for sure, no government in the world can lock down Christmas. At least they cannot lock down Christmas in our hearts. No emergency orders have the power to obliterate the spirit of Christmas.

This Christmas will be the first of its kind in one hundred years. But it will be Christmas. We will wear masks, practice physical distancing, avoid crowds, shy away from traditional large family Christmas dinners, avoid having shoulder-tight-packed church services and concerts, but we will still have Christmas.

Ultimately, Christmas is a time and spirit for sharing and giving. This year our giving and sharing will be different, but what is most important, we will celebrate. The darkness of COVID 19 will not dampen our spirits. In April this year, at the beginning of the serious lockdown in our country, I wrote an article entitled, "The Jasmine is Still Sweet." I reminded you that the Jasmine flower only produces its sweetness at nights because it has to be dark and cooler for the sweet aroma to be released. Similarly, COVID19 is dark and cold. Darkness also means pain and misery. It is only through the darkness and pain we can truly see the beauty and smell the sweet aromas of love and grace around us. This is the time of the year to truly "see" and "smell" the beauty in spite of the darkness (COVID19). Let us join in and be happy.

Observe our streets round about beautiful decorations, public Christmas trees, the dangling ornaments and bells from the stores and homes. They are already beaming the joys of Christmas. The stores are busy, and the music is cheering: "It's Christmas time again." So, let's join in and sing.

I congratulate the Government and civic leaders for pushing through the most painful time in our modern history by showing the lights of happiness. That is certainly one of the tips we, as mental health professionals, tell our clients. We tell them to celebrate the moment. Avoid fretting over the situations over which we have no control. Live one moment at a time. This is what we are doing as a nation this month.

The pain is great but we must celebrate this Christmas just like we always have. As I drive the streets and notice the decorated homes, brightened shop window displays, the ornamental lights on our streets, etc., my spirit is lifted. There is hope for our country. We are a resilient people. We will not let the pandemic drag us down. If you only have a candle to celebrate with, still celebrate. If you do not have money to purchase a gift to give to someone, remember just being alive at this time is a great gift—celebrate.

TIPS FOR A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS

1. Avoid having large family gatherings that usually only get together once or twice a year. There is a great risk that someone in the group might spread the virus to others. I like what the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States says on this point: "Indoor gatherings, especially those with poor ventilation (for example, small, enclosed spaces with no outside air), pose more risk than outdoor gatherings."

2. Have a video chat/meeting on Christmas day. Do you realize that more people can attend a video fun time than in person? In addition, there is no risk of spreading the virus.
3. Do a drive-by hello. While avoiding visiting and meeting in large groups, you can still have a fun Christmas by driving around to relatives and friends and give them a special Christmas greeting from your car and even leave them a simple Christmas treat. Believe or not, with the restrictions, it might really cause some of us to visit more people than before, although from a distance. That can really bring moments of cheer and happiness.
4. Have an open-air sing-along. Nothing is more special than singing or listening to music. Some are able to cheer up the neighborhoods by playing sweet Christmas music on the outside of their homes.
5. Take a special treat, meal or other gift to an adult or children's nursing home.
6. Those who can, may choose to purchase gift certificates and drop them off to friends or relatives. This will avoid the extra touching and worrying of spreading the virus.
7. Always wear masks, keep the physical distance, and wash hands frequently. If small gatherings are allowed by the emergency orders during Christmas, these protocols reduce the risk of further spreading of the virus. Remember the greater the number of people in the group, the closer people tend to be, and the higher the risk of infection.
8. Have a healthy diet. This Christmas is different than all other past Christmases. This time, because of the pandemic, we should maintain strong immune systems. Thus, avoid the large intake of sugary foods (ice cream, cakes, sodas, etc.). They will certainly suppress the immune system. This is one Christmas when parents can discover healthy, delicious alternatives to all of those life-threatening surgery stuff. Here's what WebMD states: "Eating or drinking too much sugar curbs immune system cells that attack bacteria. This effect lasts for at least a few hours after downing a couple of sugary drinks. Eat more fruits and vegetables, which are rich in nutrients like vitamins C and E, plus beta-carotene and zinc."

Dear readers, let us view the restrictions during this pandemic as an opportunity to grow and love more meaningfully. Yes, this is going to be a wonderful Christmas. Let's enjoy it.

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