

Being Alone During the Holidays

For many of us, the holidays are synonymous with family, so spending a holiday alone can be a rough experience. This year, with restrictions on travel, social gatherings and other traditional aspects of the holidays, many of us will be on our own throughout the season, maybe for the first time ever. While that may be difficult, keep in mind that there are many things you can do to ensure you get as much as you can out of your holiday season.

Stay in Touch

You may not be able to be with your family physically, but you can still be in contact with them. Schedule time for everyone to join together on a video chat over Zoom or Skype or other virtual gathering platform. Make it feel like a holiday gathering by sharing photos, raising a glass to each other or opening presents with each other. You can even plan to sit down for your holiday meals at the same time and share the experience via video.

Seek Others Out

Chances are that if you do not have holiday plans, at least one other person you know also does not have holiday plans. Ask around and see if some friends want to get together via video chat or an outdoor, socially distanced and safe gathering. They will be grateful that you took the initiative to make plans.

Another good option for being around others is volunteering. Many organizations, including soup kitchens and homeless shelters, take on extra volunteers around the holidays to accommodate for larger numbers. Ask to help out – you may even find yourself making new friends. Just remember to adhere to guidelines for safe interactions during the COVID-19 outbreak.

A pet can be a great companion, especially during the holidays. If you have one, get it a special treat and enjoy its company. If you do not have a pet, the holiday season is a great time to consider getting one, if you are able to care for it.

Treat Yourself

If you are planning on spending your holiday alone at home, consider treating yourself to something special. This indulgence will give you something to look forward to and make the holiday feel unlike an ordinary day. Ideas include:

- Movie marathon with your favorite snacks
- Home spa treatments
- Stocking up on books and reading them with a hot beverage

You could also take this time to focus on self and home improvement. Why not tackle the painting project you have been putting off? Or, if you have been telling yourself you should take up a new hobby, do that now.

If you would like to venture out of the house, brainstorm some of your favorite activities. Some other activities that would get you out of the house include:

- Ice skating or skiing, where possible
- Taking a winter hike
- Going for a drive
- Dining outdoors at a favorite or special restaurant

Examine Your Feelings

Learning to cope with being alone during the holiday season can be a challenge. You might experience bouts of loneliness.

The pain of loneliness can lead to unhealthy coping skills such as overeating, abusing alcohol or overspending. Instead, try to identify healthy ways to cope with your feelings. Go for a walk, engage in a hobby, or do something kind for yourself. Limit your time on social media during the holidays if seeing photos of others enjoying the holidays deepens your sadness.

If you feel burdened by feelings of loneliness or feel them throughout the year and find it difficult to deal with, you may want to examine what's behind your feelings of loneliness, either on your own or with the help of a therapist.

Resources

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): www.samhsa.gov/