

CARING CONVERSATIONS

HOLIDAY HOPE: (HEALTHY OPTIONS POSITIVE ENGAGEMENTS)

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There was much to contemplate as we prepared our newsletter this month given the times and living with the rules of the pandemic. One idea kept surfacing regarding the upcoming breaks, Holidays.” They mean a lot to many of us and we wondered what it could be like for others. We thought about having “caring conversations,” - what it means when a true holiday of gathering is upon us. The possibility of seeing immediate family members, getting together with friends, and traveling to see other loved ones is very exciting. So, the question is, “how should we do this?” Can we experience a holiday where we all get to sit outside (this sounds like a cold option to consider, especially if it is snowing, but a safer one)? I guess we could gather inside, where it is warm, cozy, but at a higher risk to spread the virus? Another option is coming to the realization that we will not be getting together and not going home, in order to protect our loved ones, as well as ourselves. These are very hard decisions to make at a time when we should be looking forward to respite care and some well needed support, along with the experience of peace, love and comfort. What has become very clear is that there is no such thing as a 100% safe way to enjoy the holiday. What things or issues should you consider, if you are going home for the holiday?

1. Going home for the holidays? Having Caring Conversations

-Time to have “the caring conversation” about what to expect, rules, what’s allowed and not allowed, have you all agreed, group support to keep the rules of engagement, physical distancing, mask wearing, eating arrangements, any other rules to follow. Have “the caring conversation” early, as soon as possible. These talks can get very emotional at times, so be calm, patient and put yourself in others’ shoes, hopefully you will get the same experience in return from others. Remember, you are all in this together. Talk about and take every precaution together. If you are home to stay, you know what to do, follow the rules.

2. Are you returning to NMSU?

-What do you need to do to be safe?

a) Continue following the rules

b) If exposed, get tested, quarantine, maintain physical distance, sanitize everything, wear a mask and make your return a positive experience with great memories to share on zoom/skype/facetime/TEAMS.

3: If you are not going home, you will still have “the caring conversation,” especially if your family is expecting you.

- a) Before you have “the caring conversation” outline your concerns, think about how best to present it to your family, you know them best. Include letting them know that you want to protect yourself, as well as wanting to protect them. Share with your family that the masks will have to come off to eat, and with others in the same room eating and talking, in close proximity increases the chance of transmitting the virus. How these issues are talked about and handled may have life changing experiences for everyone present in the room, and after they leave.
- b) Ok, you have your outline, now what? Having these discussions can be intense, they can get very emotional, and some family members may not agree and have very different reactions than you do. Regardless, there are things to consider.
 1. Remember to facilitate discussions about great past holiday experiences
 2. Manage the current holiday discussions for safety and support, and
 3. Discuss what plans may look like for future holidays and remember to find common ground!!!!

We realize that these are only “quick tips,” but it gives you a few ways to think about the holiday and to plan ahead, whether it is this upcoming holiday or any of the holidays that will occur in the next few months. Holidays are very cherished times for many of us, where memories are made and of course for others, where our skills of communication are often challenged by those that mean the most to us. We hope you use this time to reflect, rest and take care of each other. Be calm, patient and contribute to **HOLIDAY HOPE** (Healthy Options Positive Engagements). Take care from the Graduate School.

WIRED: What should you do about holiday gatherings and COVID-19? https://apple.news/AIDhQq-RhSvmMVBqB_dxFWg