

# How to Help Kids Handle Holiday Disappointment During COVID-19

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This year has been difficult to say the least. With the holidays approaching – and the challenges and uncertainty of the coronavirus pandemic still ongoing – you may be wondering how to help your child cope with the disappointment of things being different this year.

Connecticut Children's pediatric psychologists join the blog with advice.

(We've grouped suggestions by age, but tips for younger children apply to older children and adults alike.)

## **0-3 years old: Focus on quality time during the holidays – and don't worry about the details.**

- Children this age will not be able to recall detailed memories of holidays past and will not recall the events

of this year in the future.

- It's okay to keep things very simple for children this age in terms of celebrations and explanations.
- All children benefit from having quiet-down time to feel love and attention from parents. With social distancing and quarantine measures in place, this is the perfect season to indulge kids with affection.

> Related: [For Happier Holidays in Quarantine, Practice Gratitude This Thanksgiving](#)

## **4-6 years old: Create new, quarantine-approved holiday traditions.**

- Establish traditions within your immediate family – make holiday decorations, make a home-made gift, cook a special meal.
- Instead of in-person visits with friends, family or even Santa, consider fun ways to have a video interaction, write letters or make cards.
- Don't punish children for having a negative reaction to holiday changes this year. Tell them that it's okay to feel sad, disappointed or angry.
- Find the positive and teach positive self-talk. For example, "[Since we don't have to travel](#), we get extra time to relax and play at home."

> Related: [8 Ways to Celebrate a Virtual Thanksgiving](#)

## **6-12 years old: Help your child cope with holiday blues – and build resilience for the future.**

- At this age, children understand the precautions that need to be taken due to COVID-19.
- Validate their feelings of disappointment and sadness about changes to their holiday traditions: It's normal and OK to feel angry, frustrated or sad.
- Remember that helping children overcome disappointment helps them build resiliency.
- Ask them for their ideas about how to make the holiday special.
- Teach fun relaxation strategies – [try yoga](#) for the first time, or [practice slowly breathing](#) in and out the scent of a favorite treat, lotion or candle.

> Related: [Growing Resilient: What Your Child Needs to Get Through Tough Times](#)

## **13-18 years old: Ask, listen and encourage COVID-safe holiday activities.**

- Ask teens how they are feeling.
- Let them know you are there if they need to talk.

- Listen! Often, teens just want someone to listen and not solve the problem for them.
- Offer perspective on the situation by looking at the big picture.
- Allow them a sense of control by giving them choices – maybe to have friend over on a different day to celebrate the holiday, or allow them to plan a special activity.
- Encourage positive social activities to honor the holiday season, such as how to volunteer in a socially distanced way.

> Related: [Is Your Teen Stressed, Sad or Angry? They May Be Feeling Grief](#)

## **Parents and caregivers: Manage your own disappointment about this holiday season.**

- Allow yourself to feel sad, worried or angry.
- Do something to nurture yourself.
- Adjust your expectations.
- Look at the big picture.
- Children take cues from their parents. If you maintain a positive, festive and calm demeanor, your kids will pick up on that and do the same.

In addition to finding ways to understand and support the

feelings of your kids, you can also find creative ways to celebrate the holidays despite the pandemic. We've included a few suggestions in the **Related Links** below.

Let this be your guide to finding all the hope, peace, joy and sense of renewal that a traditional holiday season brings.

## Related Links

- [14 Ways to Have a Safe Halloween During COVID-19, Even in Quarantine](#)
- [8 Ways to Celebrate a Virtual Thanksgiving During COVID-19](#)
- [For Happier Holidays in Quarantine, Practice Gratitude This Thanksgiving](#)
- [Tips and Tools to Support Your Child's Mental Health](#)

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