



Keep the celebration going ... in some way

You've heard the advice to find the positive and practice gratitude, whether you celebrate that the sun is shining or that you are healthy. This can be challenging for people who have had to cancel milestone event celebrations due to social distancing requirements. Birthdays are being marked alone, weddings postponed. No funerals create a lack of closure for loved ones. Graduation ceremonies are not going to happen, and family traditions can't be celebrated as usual, because people aren't gathering for a holiday.

In this time of cancellations and postponement, we must allow ourselves the ability to grieve. Elaine Lipworth writes that certain events are considered once-in-a-lifetime activities. These are extremely meaningful to the participant, such as a wedding, prom, or graduation. People dream of and plan for these activities, and when they are not able to experience them, they may feel that something is missing.

An important part of grieving is talking about it, so if someone needs to share their feelings, let them. Don't try to minimize the situation, because that can minimize the value of the event. The people who are experiencing this loss of a missed opportunity need to have the opportunity to feel the sadness, because resisting despair doesn't make the sense of loss go away. By taking the time to grieve and face the sorrow, we can become empowered to find a new way to celebrate.

In an article by John's Hopkins, social distancing is defined as "deliberately increasing the physical space to avoid spreading the illness." We are meant to distance ourselves physically, but this is not the time to isolate yourself. In fact, the same article states that it is important to maintain or strengthen connections now. That means we need to find new ways to celebrate.

If you Google social distancing and celebrations, there are approximately 964 million results. Here are some takeaways:

If you are celebrating someone, make sure that person is the focus. This might sound obvious, but it is easy to get involved in a discussion about how grandma is doing during your 5-year-old's birthday.

Don't let the day go by. It might seem easier to avoid celebrating on that day, but avoidance can limit the healing process.

Take the time to start new traditions for your immediate family that you can perhaps share with the extended family.

Make plans for after it is all over. No matter what you are celebrating, it is a struggle to have to cancel or postpone that event. Find ways to think outside of the box to celebrate and continue to look forward to those events to get through this challenging time. Celebrate a missed prom with friends after restrictions have been lifted by getting dressed up and doing something that fits your group. Plan a big dinner with the family to incorporate all the missed holidays.

The Village EAP is taking COVID-19 seriously and we are working to provide the best continued services to you. If you feel like you or an employee could benefit from talking to a counselor and have our EAP contract, please contact The Village EAP at 1-800-627-8220 to access your free and confidential sessions. We are here so you don't have to go it alone.

Here are some online resources and ideas to help you plan a celebration in the time of physical distancing:

Children's Birthday

- [14 Ways to Celebrate Your Child's Birthday During COVID-19](#) – Connecticut Connection
- [How to Handle Your Kids Canceled Birthday Party and Still Make It Special](#) – Good Housekeeping

Adult Birthday Parties

- [How to Celebrate A Birthday While Social Distancing](#) – Refinery29
- [How to host an online party \(and why you should\)](#) – Paperless Post

Weddings

- [The Knot's COVID-19 Wedding Help](#) – TheKnot.com
- [Expert Advice COVID-19](#) – Zola.com

Graduation

- Host a **virtual graduation** with family and friends, including guest speakers who talk about the future and the graduate.
- Invite people to **write letters** of memories and advice to the graduate that can be put in a book (this can be done for any celebration).
- Find an **inspirational graduation speech** on YouTube and share it as part of the virtual graduation ceremony.
- **Take pictures** in a cap and gown.
- Make the day **about the graduate**.

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