



AGING TODAY Can't Pause for the Pandemic

By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions



Imagine, you overheard one end of this telephone conversation:

I know you want to be engaging in activities. It is important to figure out how to make it as safe as possible. We know abstinence only is not realistic, and no restrictions will sooner or later be destructive to you and those you care about. Safety is paramount while navigating this new terrain.

Before March 2020, this conversation sounds like the sex talk you had with your kids or your parents had with you. As we approach the holiday season, these are conversations we should be having with family as we make plans and plan on contingencies.

The holidays present challenges as we grapple with COVID fatigue and yearn for our old life. No question, these are hard decisions to make. Do we have a skip year? Experts are predicting that our pandemic life will spill over into the next few rounds of holidays. Maybe then we should plan to visit in person. Uncertainty, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, a true trifecta of bah humbug.

A great weapon in the arsenal to combat helplessness is the knowledge and determination to control the controllables. We have learned so much about how this virus spreads since it rocked our world last Spring. For now, what we can do is go with the swiss cheese strategy. Visualize each intervention, such as mask wearing, physical distancing, and outdoor dining as imperfect barriers to virus transmission as represented by the holes in the cheese. When multiple partially effective interventions are combined, like stacked swiss cheese slices, the gaps are covered, and virus transmissions are less likely.

A traditional Thanksgiving dinner which includes mixing families that do not live together, mask-less and laughing and speaking loudly could seed a superspreading event. How about taking the party

outdoors, with families at separate tables? If you must take the gathering back indoors wear a mask, open the windows, and use an air purifier with a hepa filter. How about getting together after dinner for a nature walk or s'mores around the fire.

If getting together is out of the question, a mobile potluck is a way your family can connect by eating the same food. Make menu assignments, pack up and deliver portions for families and share in the culinary joy of each other's special recipes. If that doesn't work for your situation, a virtual cooking demonstration may inject some excitement into the zoom fatigue that we are beginning to experience.

Creativity is the key to virtual visits. Family trivia in the form of jeopardy-like games can really fuel joy, laughter, and optimism. Make up games to zoom by like your own versions of Jimmy Fallon thank you notes, mad libs, or good old-fashioned hangman.

In truth, I am worried that even the most fastidious pandemic rule followers will let their hair down this Holiday season. I can assure you that the coronavirus will not be taking a Holiday. I see this comic illustration in my head. It's the molecule speaking, "Hey, spike protein, no need to penetrate a new host and initiate infection, it's time for a vacation, see you after the 1st of the year."

My hope is that my fellow Americans feel that sense of honor to protect our most vulnerable. I also think about that old Hebrew National commercial when I say to you, my Jewish News readers: "We answer to a higher authority."



This column was published in [Lovin' Life After 50](#) and [Jewish News](#) as Cypress' monthly contribution.

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