

PUBLICATION

Baker's Dozen: Holiday Tips for the Pandemic

December 03, 2020

For this issue's Baker's Dozen, we asked our friends across the nation, "What are your tips for making the holidays special this year in light of the pandemic?"

1. For the first time ever, I decided to put up my Christmas tree in early November. If we're stuck at home, might as well make it festive! I love to cook all winter, but especially around the holidays, so I plan to try my hand this year at some new recipes that I can share with family and friends, even if we can't spend time together in person like we normally would.



– Katie Martin, Vice President of Operations, Legal Counsel, Trilogy Health Services

2. I moved away from my native New England roots and my family of origin nearly 30 years ago. This year has emphasized the fact that a flight home is no longer an easy an option with state-by-state quarantine rules and the impact my traveling could have on aging parents. So, this holiday season I will continue what has become commonplace for me in 2020: regular calls home to tell them how much I love and miss them. Once this mayhem ends, my goal is to wrap an entire year of missed festivities into an extended celebration with my family in person!



– Daniele Frenner, Assistant Vice President, Medical Claims, The Doctors Company Specialty Underwriters

3. Focus on the silver lining. With all its devastation, the pandemic has also brought more quality time at home with family. We are dusting off some beloved, yet labor intensive, family recipes we have not had time to make in recent years. We are also planning to go all out with Christmas decorations, and we are hopeful that other do as well! One of our favorite (and pandemic friendly) holiday traditions is driving around at night looking at all the beautiful lights.



– Melissa S. Gruner, Associate Counsel – Litigation, Signature HealthCARE

4. This holiday season, my focus is to remember to appreciate and express gratitude for the meaningful moments life and our loved ones provide, and not stress over traditions. Give yourself the grace for an imperfect holiday and look for ways to establish new traditions – maybe a secret Santa gift exchange through the mail with cousins or friends, visiting outdoor light displays, or using services like StoryCorps to capture your family's oral history. Let's remember what matters, not what is missing.



– *Monica Wharton, Executive Vice President and Chief Administration Officer, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare*

5. The holidays will look very different this year; however, we still need to do things that bring us joy. Some of my plans include getting outside on a sunny day. I enjoy taking walks in the park, but also enjoy walking around my neighborhood at night, enjoying the Christmas lights. Because I might not get to experience a Christmas concert, my solution is to take a drive, tune in my favorite Christmas station, and sing out loud! I also plan to take some shortcuts in the kitchen (ordering pre-made meals) and just enjoy some quiet, peaceful days at home! Trying to keep it simple this year, because 2020 has not been so simple.



– *Robyn Rogers, Assistant Vice President, Professional Liability, National HealthCare Corporation*

6. This holiday season, I plan to follow the advice I received from a dear friend and instead of seeing the darkness of the year, instead "look for the light" – cherish these moments with my family, show kindness to others by making donations to organizations in need, show appreciation, and celebrate the positive things of the past year.



– *Leah Silver, Executive VP of Human Resources, BioPlus Specialty Pharmacy*

7. Not being able to shop, congregate, and break bread with ALL our loved ones forces us to think outside the box! Here are few tips: I created a [Wonderbly](#) personalized book for my soon-to-be-granddaughter. Through Facetime, I'll read "Ansley Grey, the Elf who saved Christmas" to her weekly until the 25th and experience her joy at seeing and hearing her name in the book. My in-laws turned 70 and won't be flying or driving right now. I'm sending a personalized throw with embroidered messages from their children and grandchildren along with airline gift cards and a trip planner to use when they are comfortable. As couples, we've planned evening potluck outdoor picnics on personalized blankets (my gift to each couple) with prepared, individual food containers, music, and wine. I've even found games that can be played as group from their own blankets. My teen daughter is doing a movie night on our lawn with a food truck and haybales covered by a personalized small blanket/pillow combo (gifts) spaced out with matching masks for each of her friends.



– *Cathy Zellner, CFO, Ferran Services & Contracting*

8. I am making the holidays special this year by focusing on giving to those who are not as fortunate as I am. This has been a rough year for everyone, but some have suffered exponentially more than others. My goal is to give as much as I possibly can to lighten their loads.



– *Ursula Holmes, Litigation Counsel, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare*

9. Make a concerted effort to be present with your loved ones and encourage them to do the same. Pretend that cell phones won't work in your house unless they are plugged into



the wall like an old-school landline. The simple act of putting your phone out of arm's reach significantly impairs its ability to interrupt you, to make you look at it instead of the person you're talking to. You also won't be nearly as tempted to look up every mundane thing the second it crosses your mind if you have to stand up and walk across the room to do it.

– Joel Hollingsworth, General Counsel, Care Centers Management Consulting

10. My husband and I decided not to travel. I've been baking and plan to ship care packages to extended family. We will have a socially distant holiday with our adult children here in New Mexico. We bought a large folding table that we will set up in the backyard. No fine china this year; we are using disposable paper plates and silverware. We will have the firepit going and six-feet between us. Luckily, we have a nice weather forecast! We will probably drive caravan style in separate cars and look at the neighborhood lights, followed by some hot chocolate and smores in the backyard.



– Sarah Johnson, Claim Manager, Pendulum Claims Management

11. They say, "Hindsight is 20/20!" Isn't it ironic that the COVID pandemic happened in the year 2020? My tip(s) for making the holidays special, is to try to write down how much each of the people you love mean to you and send it to them. Show unconditional love to EVERYONE and find ways to serve others, especially those in need! When you get to the end of the year, you won't have any regrets and you won't think, "Ah, I wish I'd done this or that, but hindsight is 20/20!"



– Quita Doss-Bunton, Senior Associate Counsel, Litigation, Signature HealthCARE

12. There is something to be said about gathering with family and listening to *A Charlie Brown Christmas* album while enjoying a festive libation or mulled cider and watching one of the classic holiday television specials narrated by Burt Ives and Fred Astaire. The nostalgia of these songs and shows remind us of peace and joy that can lift our spirits even amid a pandemic.



– Stephen V. Roberts, Vice President, Associate General Counsel, Premise Health

13. Being a military brat, my family doesn't have holiday traditions. We are accustomed to making every holiday special in its own way. Despite the pandemic, this rings true for the holidays this year. Every moment we spend together or just spending time alone should be a special moment. This year has been difficult for everyone and the best thing we can do to make the holidays special is to focus on what our hearts need. We may not have the ability to spend this year with family, but we can focus on self-care. Our minds, bodies, and spirits can use a little refreshing. Instead of concentrating on how different the holidays are this year, channel that energy into rest and bringing peace to your mind. I plan on taking this time to reflect and bring light to all my blessings despite the adversity I have faced.



– Camille Turner, Diversity and Women's Initiative Coordinator, Baker Donelson

