



THE HOLIDAYS: REIMAGINED

As I write this, the election results are still unknown, COVID cases are resurging, Hurricane Eta is deciding whether to approach South Florida, and countless news articles discuss the continued racial strife throughout our nation. While I have always maintained that Thanksgiving is the annual gateway holiday, I am winding it back this year. By gateway holiday I mean the unofficial, but universal, start of giving ourselves permission to eat and drink with abandon until January 2nd. Based on anecdotal evidence and observation, that gateway opened in March.

Given that travel may be limited or impossible and eating and drinking with abandon are already deeply embedded in our COVID lifestyle, how are we going to reimagine the holidays this year?

We have already witnessed some wonderfully creative Halloween celebrations. Candy shoots, festooned with bats and spiders, delivered Halloween treats in a fun and safe socially distance manner. The morning after, makeshift driveway “candy stands” were still open and remained partially stocked. Social media, crowded with photos and videos of pumpkin carving and costume contests, alerted us all to alternative festivities. ***So, what’s next?***

Before you start stockpiling Pepperidge Farm Cubed Stuffing and Libby’s Pure Pumpkin (remember the TP shortage), ask your loved ones: “What is it about the Thanksgiving celebration that is meaningful to each of you?” We had this conversation as a family years ago. We threw out traditional Thanksgiving foods. My sons don’t particularly like turkey, and I spent half of my childhood in Europe, so turkey wasn’t deemed a requirement. We usually get in some activity such as a run/walk or a round of golf. We collectively prepare and dine on roast beef sandwiches and stone crabs. We aren’t really dessert people, though we will share a bite of pumpkin pie and a scoop of vanilla ice cream. The boys will watch football. I will nap. Everyone is happy. Not every American tradition, but enough of them to make it both Thanksgiving and ours.

Fast forward to Christmas. For years, we decorated the house as though we lived in Vermont. The outdoor lighting display was so ornate that it may have been visible from the International Space Station. We had a lengthy Christmas card list, the obligatory kids’ photo and the annual “brag and

gag” letter that all hit the streets no later than December 10th. Gift opening ceremonies were accompanied by mimosas and could last for hours. Five years ago, over their winter break, my sons were offered a once-in-a-lifetime trip to New Zealand. With no one heading home for the holidays, I once again asked “What are your most cherished of our holiday traditions?” It wasn’t the elaborate décor, the lights, the cards, the photo or the gifts. It was the advent calendar counting down to the holiday, the New England lobster dinner on Christmas Eve, and the gift tags. Woah! All the rest of the fuss existed only in my head and was wearing me out needlessly!

Taking a marketing approach to the celebration, our current decorations consist of lighted wreaths on the front doors and a Charlie Brown Christmas Tree purchased for \$9.99 at Walgreen’s. We have the advent calendar, the lobster dinner and particularly clever gift tags. You see, since Santa is no longer in the picture, the gift tags are used as clues. For example: a sleeping bag from LL Bean, a putter from Tiger Woods, a bass guitar from Paul McCartney etc. You get the picture. It is far less frenzied and so much more fun. Again, a few traditions but only our favorites.

This year, especially, give yourself permission to keep it simple. Have the conversation. Don’t be surprised if Thanksgiving turns into pizza and football. BTW there are no laws requiring strict adherence to family traditions.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20+ years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

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