Ways to spend the holidays with grandchildren during the pandemic

Source: David Weisenhorn, senior extension specialist for parent and child adolescence education

Since COVID-19 affects older adults more severely than other age groups, many older individuals, particularly those with compromised immune systems, have been encouraged to limit their exposure to others. With the holidays quickly approaching, that can make spending time with family, especially beloved young grandchildren, trickier than ever. The good news is older adults do not have to spend the season alone, as options exist to safely connect with their family.

The safest way to connect to family is through video conferencing. While it may not feel the same, families can establish a set schedule that allows grandparents to interact with their children and grandchildren. Not only does this allow for safe interactions, but it gives each family member something to look forward to. Grandparents can use this time to share holiday traditions like cooking, decorating, storytelling and sharing memories of past holidays or let their grandchildren decide what activity they are going to do together.

In-person visiting is possible, if all family members take proper precautions and understand the ground rules beforehand. These rules should include wearing face masks and socially distancing around family members who live in other locations. Discourage family members from touching one another. This includes hugging, kissing or even holding hands.

While families cannot show their love and affection for others through traditional ways, there are other things they can do to make the season memorable for everyone. Perhaps grandparents would like to write a note to their grandchild. They can include things like how important they are to them, how much they love them and how proud they are of them. This will be a keepsake a grandchild can cherish years down the road. Grandparents can also start new traditions like teaching their grandchildren a silly dance they do every year before sharing a holiday meal. Heartfelt conversations are always important to have with loved ones and are not impacted by the pandemic.

This holiday season will be one we will remember for many years to come, so focus on positive ways to make new family memories. For more information, contact the (COUNTY NAME) office of the UK Cooperative Extension Service.

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