The holidays will no doubt be a little different this year as we make accommodations to keep ourselves and loved ones safe. It’s the perfect time to add new twists to old traditions and develop new ones that may become cherished rituals.

Here are some tips to get through the holiday season safely and create positive memories at the end of this tumultuous year:

- **Take comfort** in familiar rituals, even if you have to adapt them. And discover ways to cope when your usual traditions are uprooted.
- However you define “family,” enrich shared meals with the Family Dinner Project’s suggestions for food, fun, and meaningful conversation starters—or try their ideas for holding a virtual dinner party if you’re unable to gather in person.
- If you plan to travel, make your travel plans soon, with awareness of COVID risks. Wear a mask and maintain social distancing while in transit, set clear expectations with anyone you’ll be visiting with, and be prepared to quarantine before and after your trip to reduce your odds of viral transmission.
- Find temporary or long-term reliable care options for elders using resources from the Employee Assistance Program (sign-in required) and Care.com.
- Assess your situation honestly and express gratitude for what you have. Studies show that giving sincere thanks can lead to better mental and physical health, and increased happiness.

In that spirit of gratitude, we thank you for reading this newsletter each month. We work hard to provide you with the best benefits, services, and perks we can find, and appreciate the time you take to explore these options. Happy holidays!
REACH OUT TO WORK FRIENDS

The connections we create with colleagues at work may not bloom into friendships out of the office, but we often spend more time with our officemates than with our close friends or even members of our own families.

Many of our colleagues will be leaving Harvard in the next few months through the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program (VERIP). The fact that the pandemic prevents us from celebrating and bidding farewell in person can leave us feeling hollow. In fact, working from home has made many of our work relations more tenuous, with real consequences to our emotional health.

Let’s take the time to acknowledge and support our coworkers:

• If you feel cheated out of an in-person goodbye to colleagues because of retirement or other life changes, consider Harvard Professor Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot’s advice on saying goodbye with grace and gratitude.

• Another way to recognize the contributions of colleagues who are retiring, or to strengthen your bonds with people you work with, is a thank you from the heart.

• Find ways to acknowledge the loss of workplace interactions—while recognizing positive continuities.

• Managers are in a unique position to help their employees continue to feel connected to their team and workplace and to avoid burnout.

The end of a calendar year is often a time of reflection and appreciation. Don’t let positive thoughts go unsaid. Consider taking a few minutes to reach out and tell someone you’re thinking about them.
MIND AND BODY
Feed your mind and body with the physical activities, intellectual stimulation, and aesthetic beauty we all need.

• Have a minute? Get wellbeing tips and tools from the Harvard Health Minute Video Series from HMS Harvard Health Publishing.

• Find out what might be in store for US health policy under a new administration at a lecture by Harvard professor and physician Zirui Song on December 17 at noon.

• Plan a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, now reopened with timed, reserved admissions only. Use promo code UM-1527196 for free museum admission and discounts on special exhibitions for HUID holders. (You will need to present your HUID for admission; learn more at outingsandinnings.harvard.edu, Harvard Key required.)

LIVING AND WORKING
The holidays are full of excitement—and often sky-high expectations. Keep yourself from spinning out by taking time out for self-care.

• During the holidays—or any time, on any day—you can take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), available 24/7, to receive free, confidential help with depression, legal and financial issues, and other personal or work-related concerns. Call 877-EAP-HARV (877-327-4278) or check out the EAP online.

• Learn effective communication, mindfulness, and resiliency skills that will help you Navigate the Holidays During COVID in a webinar on December 15.

• Prepare to be your best self during the holidays by taking the Caring for Yourself, and Caring for Others, Through Mindfulness webinar on December 16.

LEARNING AND GROWTH
Consider these timely tips to take better control of your tasks at work.

• Don’t let change throw you off course. Become a proactive manager through the Change Management course from Harvard ManageMentor (HarvardKey required).

• Write better emails—that get results. Learn how to organize and format your messages at the Email for Action workshop (HarvardKey required).

• Develop (or sharpen) your management skills with the Project Management Foundations course through LinkedIn Learning.

FINANCES AND SECURITY
Take steps to get into good financial shape for the new year.

• Did you adopt a “pandemic pet” this year? Whether you have a new addition to the household or a longtime companion, consider pet insurance from Pets Best.

• Submit your 2020 bicycle commuter expenses (including months spent working from home) for reimbursement by January 31. And, remember: Harvard provides a discount for an annual Blue Bikes membership.

• Fraudulent claims for unemployment benefits are on the rise, with multiple reports from Harvard employees. If you believe someone falsely filed for unemployment in your name, take steps to report this crime and protect your credit.

To explore additional Harvard employee events, view the full calendar on HARVie.