

Talk with your kids

Prepare your kids for a different holiday season

If you are like many parents, you saw it coming, but have put it off: the talk with your kids about how 2020 holidays will be different this year. As your family prepares to celebrate in safe and healthy ways, include children in the discussion to help them emotionally prepare and also experience joy. Here are some things to keep in mind as you plan to sit them down:

- **Find the right time to chat.** Be thoughtful and intentional about this conversation. Plan a time when everybody is focused, open and receptive to tougher talks.
- **Avoid assumptions.** Don't create stories in your head about how kids may respond to new plans. Your children may have a different reaction than you or other family members regarding changed traditions.
- **Ask questions.** Start the conversation with curiosity. Use phrases like "what is one thing you really want to happen during the holiday?" or "what does celebration and love look and feel like to you?" Listen and learn what makes them feel special then get creative with your compromises. For example, if your son says he likes sharing pie with grandma, bake together and have one sent her way. Then, enjoy it together over the phone or computer.
- **Embrace new traditions.** Sometimes forced creativity results in something great. Have your family write a list of new ways you'll spend time together during the holidays, and be sure you check every item off that list. You never know when hot chocolate for breakfast or Friday family fun night might become something permanent and bonding.
- **Share the rules and why they exist.** After planning all the fun, be sure to talk through why this year will be different. Share expectations around distancing, mask wearing and smaller gatherings and the impact of how these can help keep others healthy and safe.
- **Listen, support and validate your kids' feelings.** It's common for kids to feel disappointed, sad or mad during this time. Actively listen, acknowledge and respect their emotions as they work to process and cope. Support helps reassure, lower stress and build resilience.

For more tips on embracing new traditions during the 2020 holidays, visit the New Directions Holiday Toolkit at ndbh.com.