

Some resources for the two groups:

With family and friends:

“Surviving the Holidays” by Karen Lee Richards

An excellent article on recommendations for patients navigating the holidays with family and friends.

<http://www.cfselfhelp.org/library/surviving-holidays>

Other articles to skim through:

<https://creakyjoints.org/family/stress-fighting-tips-holidays-chronic-illness/>

<https://www.webmd.com/balance/features/chronic-illness-holidays>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/navigating-a-chronic-illness-during-the-holidays-202112142658>

<https://www.massmecfs.org/more-resources-for-me-cfs/361-tips-for-traveling-if-you-are-a-cfidsme-a-fm-patient>

The continuing issue of Covid-19 exposure and the increased risk to ME-CFS patients: “A soup of Omicron variants is swirling across the U.S....” Asking relatives about their thinking on precautions...thinking and talking through the issue together may eliminate some of the tension, esp. out of concern for the ill person. Before gathering people may want to minimize their close interactions with groups of other people so as to reduce possible exposure. Also people can take home tests before the gathering. If people are traveling they ought to mask during the transportation. Anyone feeling sick should stay home!

People with viral-related/immune dysfunction illnesses are more vulnerable to Covid-19 – if they are going to family functions, they should think carefully about the size of the gathering and the amount of closeness of people during the get together. If it is too risky, it is better to graciously decline for reasons of health. If the gathering is at the patient’s home, they should have the least close contact

possible – maybe seating arrangements can be altered. Also, for the sake of exposure, the number of people gathering can be reduced.

For Navigating Holidays by oneself

National Suicide Prevention Hotline – **988** <https://988lifeline.org/>

<https://psychcentral.com/health/spending-holidays-alone-coping-tips#recap>

<https://greatist.com/health/alone-for-the-holidays#13-ways-to-get-the-most-out-of-your-holidays-alone>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W44PmM-4GC4> Watch 3:37- 4:55 min. on finding ways to connect, even over phone and media communication

Thoughts –

There are the relatively severely-ill or the severely-ill patients who are basically home-bound, often living alone, and perhaps only able to get out for essentials – and spending most of the time by themselves.

The loss of most of their former lives is severely felt from time to time – and the Thanksgiving and December holidays can multiply these feelings. Even relatively healthy people “alone for the holidays” will feel depressed or anxious. It’s natural – holidays are supposed to be festive with people celebrating together.

Navigating this time alone for the more severely ill patient is more difficult than for the more moderately ill patient.

The thoughts below apply to both groups – but those who are moderately ill will have more options for some social contact or perhaps getting out a bit – or perhaps feeling less hopeless.

The first encouragement: Try to have some contact with relatively understanding loved-ones, family, and friends. Perhaps someone can come by, even for a short visit – as long as they are not at risk for Covid. Set up a phone conversation, text, or FB. Contact is important – perhaps a couple of contacts over the holidays.

Also if possible, take a little holiday initiative – call some people you know that are relatively sympathetic – say hello and wish them Happy Holidays or a Merry Christmas. No expectations – make a human connection, however you choose to do it.

If a person has a therapist, talk to them about getting through the holidays. Maybe you can even devise a plan, based on your options for contact.

If you are not so ill, maybe send a few cards – if you get a card, you can call, text, email a thank you.

There will be times certainly when you are alone, thinking about what you are missing, feeling left out, pining for the days and good times of the past holidays.

How do you cope when you are with yourself, depressed, and in your own mind. It may be – or may not – that reminiscing on some of the good times will bring happier feelings – just leave the comparing aside. Good memories have some power; think of them as a balm. Let them be in you just for themselves as perhaps a momentary uplift. But if they start to grieve you, then back-away. The song: “When the dog bites, when the bee stings, when I feeling sad, I simply remember my favorite things” – What are your favorite things – what memories are in your joy box.

Another coping method is to divert yourself to a pleasant activity that takes you away to something that engages you – “you get into a zone”. Maybe certain music, a favorite movie or book “transports” you.

The point is to reduce, if possible, the depression at least for certain amounts of time. It also important to “get through” the holidays – a relatively brief period.

If you do start sinking into real hopelessness, depression, or are even thinking of suicide don’t even hesitate to call the 988 suicide and depression help line. Just this contact should help –they will be aware of how people feel during the holidays. A kind voice can make a big difference.

For those who are more moderately-ill – see what contacts you can have that are safe. If the weather is good, see if a friend is available for some egg-nog, etc. Or maybe just drive to see the holiday lights.

And don't forget your fellow patients if you know any – or even a friend in a similar state of mind. Your reaching out will mean a lot.