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Family Day

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I'm not sure there's ever been a more important time to talk about the importance of family. The pandemic has ensured that whether we wanted to or not, we are now spending more time with our loved ones than ever before ? perhaps even to the point where we're not so ?in love? with them some days! Now, here we are approaching a weekend specifically designed (IMHO) to lift our spirits during the middle of the coldest month of the year, when most of us are at our wits' end. It's a ?holiday? focused on family that in a pre-pandemic world have served as a delightful reminder of all the fun reasons we had kids in the first place and forced us to enjoy each other's company. Now, however, after almost a year of being barricaded behind closed doors together, a long weekend ?celebrating? togetherness might sound to you like nails on a chalkboard or having a root canal without the benefit of drugs. How are you spending Family Day?

February and November rival one another for dullest and most depressing months of the year.

There are virtually no redeeming features to either. With the time change, darkness settles in nice and early in November and the weather alternates between rain and snow ? Mother Nature not having yet decided whether to turn the thermostat fully down to minus ?my nose is currently frozen shut? Celsius. If we're lucky, for many of us we still have a holiday to look forward to in December. Then comes January, still on a post-holiday high and perhaps riding out the good intentions of exercise, getting fit and enjoying the snow because you're not yet sick of it. Then? Well then, it's February, the shortest month of the year for a reason, because dragging it out even two extra days would just be cruel and unusual punishment. February is officially the kind of weather where only your eyes might be visible under all that winter gear and that's only so you can see where you're going! For those of us that don't ski, are too old to risk life and limb tobogganing and who, generally speaking, find the idea of being outdoors on purpose just plain ridiculous, the idea of an enforced holiday with family just adds to the misery. Or does it?

Sure, we've spent an awful lot of time with family this past year and I'm guessing, some of that time was awful! In my house, we ended up with a third young adult living with us throughout the pandemic and, as a result, my office has been displaced to the dining room and my grocery bill rivals the gross national debt of some small countries. What was supposed to be our first year as ?empty-nesters? has turned into an episode of Full House. We were even convinced to rescue a pandemic puppy. (They literally created a PowerPoint presentation ? we didn't stand a chance.) Some days, the only time alone any of us gets is when we're in the shower and that has to be carefully timed because hot water is a precious commodity. I'm pretty sure these three young adults have no more interest in spending more family time together with hubby and I this weekend (never mind Valentine's Day) than they would in prepping for a colonoscopy! But, the government has dictated, it's Family Day weekend so the pressure is on to think of something wonderful to do together, even though we're in lockdown and technically, we're not actually allowed to do anything together!

As for all you parents who are currently parenting little ones, home schooling little ones, trying to entertain little ones, keep little ones busy and keep them sane ? and oh yeah ? all while working full time too ? you have my deepest sympathies. Coping with the challenges of managing children not yet old enough to bathe themselves, or fighting with those who can but refuse to, is something for which there is only one cure. Wine. Wine is the cure. Trust me.

Of course, this is all tongue in cheek. At the end of the day, the pandemic really has taught us that in this formerly fast-paced world of work and school and organized after school activities and sports and chores and grocery shopping and well, you get the idea, finding time with family is not only important, it's really the only thing important thing that matters. Our health, and that of our loved ones, is why we are all spending so much time staying together under one roof and staying apart from friends, school and co-workers. It's so that at the end of all this this enforced family time, ALL members of ALL of our families will be able to finally be together.

It might require some creativity and you might sooner choose to stay in bed all day ignoring the world (and your family) but,

honestly ? there's never been a more important time than now to love and appreciate the value of family. There are a variety of things you can do together locally, and safely, provided you take all appropriate precautions. It turns out Palgrave pond is still open for skating (at least as of time of writing) and there are a number of community rinks open too. The Caledon Trailway is great for hiking, cross-country skiing and in some locations ? take-out treats are just a few steps away from the path and outdoor picnics (or at the very least hot chocolate) can be fun.

Plan for a Valentine's Day that includes the whole family and order in from one of our many amazing local restaurants and you'll be doing good for both our community and your family ? plus, it's a night off from cooking! If you're able to, use this weekend, and this continued lockdown time, to create new traditions your family will remember. Friday night ?build your own pizza? has become a tradition in our house and we know others who have used this time to teach their pre-teens how to cook, a valuable life skill that could prevent years of KD dependency. There ARE opportunities to do things a little differently if only we see them as opportunities. And, if you don't see them as opportunities ? consider investing in air pods. No one can see you're wearing air pods, and you remain blissfully unaware of the chaos around you. If the thought of more family time still sounds like nails on a chalkboard, just turn up the volume on those babies to full blast!