

HOLIDAY GUIDE

20



20

THE ORACLE

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The gift of giving back



Audra Nikolajski

STAFF WRITER

In a year where the self-isolating habits of Ebenezer Scrooge have come back in style, it can be difficult to find ways to serve the community while maintaining social distancing guidelines.

However, you should not resort to choruses of “Bah Humbug” just yet. There are still many ways to give back this season that will impress even the strictest ghosts of the past, present and future while keeping you and your community safe.

Donate like the Dickens

Due to business closures, layoffs and stay-at-home orders, many families are struggling to make ends meet. Thanksgiving and holiday dinners are expensive and costs of presents can rack up. So, this holiday season should be a season of giving.

One of the easiest ways to help the community while trying to keep in-person contact to a minimum is by picking up a few extra canned goods at the grocery store and donating them to local soup kitchens like Trinity Cafe or homeless shelters like Recovery Services of Tampa Bay. The Feed-A-Bull Food Pantry at USF is also accepting monetary donations virtually or foodstuffs in person to feed students year-round.

If you live in the Tampa area, Metropolitan Ministries is one of the best organizations to donate

to. They serve families of many different income levels, and one family can pick up as much or as little food as they need to complete their holiday meals.

It is also important to give to children who may not be with a family this holiday season. Several organizations in Tampa, like A Kid’s Place, house foster children. They often publish a wish list which details the gifts that the children want for Christmas, and you can pick an item or two to drop off for them.

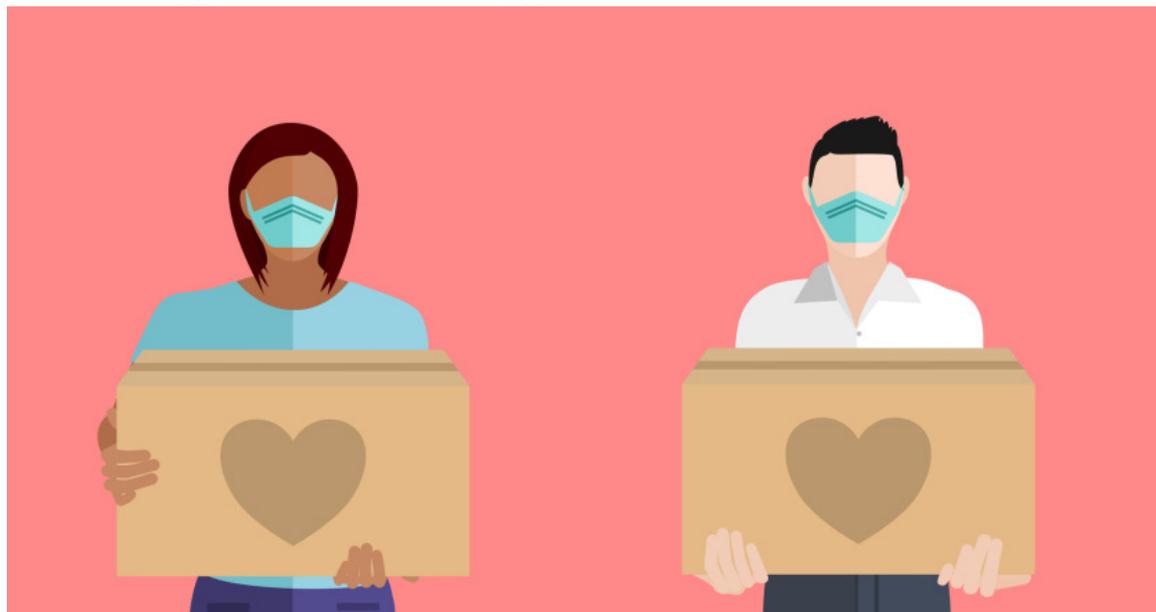
You can also “adopt” a child from a Foster Angel Tree in your community. These are Christmas trees placed in the surrounding area of the foster organization in Walmarts, schools or other community centers. They hold ornaments in the shape of angels which list the wishes of foster children.

The person who pulls the ornament from the tree purchases the gifts the child wished for and leaves them underneath the tree for the organization to pick up for the kids.

Not your average Christmas Carol-ing

Traditionally, a lot of individuals would spend time volunteering at nursing homes during the holiday season, whether that be by caroling down the halls or sitting with patients and listening to tales of holidays past while holiday music plays on the radio.

With the elderly being the most at-risk group, finding other ways to interact with them is important to keep the holiday spirits high. Aging Services of Hillsborough County and many other similar organizations nationwide are setting up ways to



Despite the pandemic challenges, there are still many ways to give back to the community during this holiday season. SPECIAL TO THE ORACE

spend time with senior citizens who may not have traditional family or volunteer visits this holiday season. You can phone in and spend time talking to them virtually, or you can sign up to “Adopt a Grandparent” and become pen pals or phone buddies.

Consider contacting Aging Services to see what options they offer to help local residents feel the holiday spirit. Alternatively, you can reach out to a nearby assisted living community like Sunrise Senior Living in Tampa to see what specific needs they have.

Souped-Up Service

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, serving in a soup kitchen might look different this year. However, this does not mean that you cannot lend a helping hand in food distribution to your community.

For those who live in Tampa, consider volunteering in a

community garden. Many areas around USF are food deserts, meaning that fresh produce cannot be grown or purchased within a multiblock radius. To prevent hunger in the area, many individuals have started community gardens which grow fresh fruits and vegetables. You can volunteer to tend these gardens without having any face-to-face interaction.

Many soup kitchens and shelters will receive this produce, so ensuring that a community garden is bountiful, fresh and well maintained can really make a difference in the quality and quantity of food served to patrons.

If you prefer face-to-face interaction, organizations like St. Vincent de Paul Community Kitchen and Resource Center in Clearwater are still seeking volunteers to serve patrons with masks and social distancing. Faith Cafe of Tampa also still needs volunteers; they accept three at a time to serve food to

those in need.

Get Sen“Tim”ental

Many children’s hospitals, like St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, organized ways for individuals to spend time with patients in their care virtually. You can sign up to take a video of yourself reading a Christmas book, or send videos of you caroling with friends for the kids to see.

There are many options depending on the needs of each children’s hospital. St. Jude asks for virtual or physical holiday cards to give to children and spread holiday cheer.

Your Christmas “Present”

Despite the pandemic restrictions, there are still many ways to give back this season. Exploring any service option will spread holiday cheer and leave members of your community saying, “God bless us, every one.”



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Things to keep in mind when planning a holiday trip



While the holiday season is known for bringing people together across great distances, CDC guidelines remain in place across all forms of travel. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE**



Jorgelina Manna-Rea

ASSISTANT NEWS
EDITOR

With the daily number of COVID-19 cases on the rise, those looking to travel this winter should either consider skipping or modifying their travel plans to abide by health and safety guidelines.

Whether you are considering flying to visit family or going on a road trip with your friends or roommates during the break, there are some important things to keep in mind to mitigate the risks of contracting the virus.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is enforcing the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention's (CDC) COVID-19 guidelines for passengers as they make their way through the airport, including 6-foot distancing and the use of face coverings.

Inside of the planes, airlines like Delta, American Airlines and Southwest Airlines are requiring passengers to wear face coverings. Delta and Southwest Airlines are also making specific changes to eliminate the occupation of the infamous middle seat in order to limit plane capacity and encourage space between passengers.

Delta has also changed its boarding procedures to boarding by row — instead of awkwardly brushing past knees and elbows of those already sat at the front of the cabin, passengers will board from the back rows to the front.

Families thinking about holiday trips might have to squeeze in a few extra days for

their vacation when planning to go out of state, as some states may require a short period of quarantine before allowing travelers to wander its towns.

For instance, if planning to visit New York City — the city famous for holiday celebrations — travelers coming from Florida will need to quarantine inside their hotels before ice skating at Rockefeller Center and serendipitously running into strangers while shopping for holiday gifts.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Oct. 31 that anyone traveling into the state must be able to provide a negative COVID-19 test within three days of their departure to New York. Once you make it, you must quarantine for at least three days and then test negative for COVID-19. If you survive the boredom of quarantine, then you can enjoy the snowy air and bright lights at

Times Square.

Even if you're not flying, road trips can still put you at risk of coming into contact with the virus. Leaving the confines of your home is already a risk — however, the CDC has made a point to give tips on staying safe when traveling on the ground.

While road trips increase contact and exposure to people throughout the mapped route, including stops for gas, bathroom and food breaks, there are still ways to mitigate the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

One measure you can take is making sure to wear your mask when you exit your vehicle, even if you're not coming into contact with anyone. Respiratory droplets can still spread to gas pumps, so wear your mask, sanitize gas pumps before and after use and sanitize your hands.

The Greyhound bus system

may be another option for a road trip without access to a personal vehicle. However, it does pose the risk of directly coming into contact with others.

Greyhound has made some more specific requirements than airlines, especially when it comes to face coverings. If a passenger's mask has a valve, vent or is unsecured in any area then they won't be allowed on the bus. The only exception being made is for toddlers. Other than that, if you have a medical condition that prevents you from wearing a mask, the Greyhound trip will have to wait.

Choosing to travel or not this winter may be more in question than past years due to the pandemic, but remaining aware of the risks, new guidelines and requirements that have emerged from it might help streamline the process of planning a safe holiday season.



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Black Friday online deals prioritized to avoid crowds



Teegan Oshins

STAFF WRITER

Black Friday is usually met with large crowds and long lines but, due to the pandemic, this year's biggest sales are going to look quite different. Instead, online deals are being marketed more than in-store exclusives and extended throughout the month of November for cautionary purposes.

Instead of spending long hours in line and clawing your way through overcrowded stores, consider pouring yourself some eggnog, relax on your couch and peacefully scroll through online retailers to quickly cross items off your wish list.

As easy as online shopping can be, it's also the safest option this holiday season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has ranked shopping in crowded areas on, or after, Thanksgiving as a "high-risk activity," warning shoppers against in-person shopping.

Companies that are already pushing for a more prominent online shopping experience, like Walmart,



As a way to mitigate the risks of spreading COVID-19, retailers are pushing for an online Black Friday during this holiday season. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

have begun sales as early as Nov. 11.

Stores that have seen large crowds on past Black Fridays, like Bed Bath and Beyond, Target and Home Depot, have also extended their online sales. Some are going as far as closing on Thanksgiving Day, which is usually the second busiest shopping day of the holiday season.

Target started its holiday sales in October, and made 20,000 more products available through its pickup and delivery services, while Walmart has hired 20,000 more employees in its eCommerce fulfillment centers to meet the increasing demand of online sales.

Black Friday deals have also been extended at Home Depot, having

been available since early November. As a cherry on top, Home Depot now also provides free shipping on over 1 million products to encourage online shopping.

There may be some consumers who want to get the entire in-person shopping holiday experience, but they will have to abide by certain safety guidelines, including using face masks, maintaining at least a 6-foot distance from others and utilizing touchless payment methods wherever possible.

Tampa International Mall seems to still be encouraging shoppers to attend Black Friday by advertising sales on its website, but have stated that they will follow the

■ See BLACK FRIDAY on PAGE 8

OPINION: Christmas is overrated, Thanksgiving is far better



Trevor Wymer

CORRESPONDENT

Gobble gobble! I have come to be the bearer of bad news. Thanksgiving is a better holiday than Christmas.

Now before you get your mistletoes and egg-nogs up in a bunch, allow me to explain. During Thanksgiving — nothing is expected of me. I show up, stuff my face and go home. It's a beautiful thing for introverts. Also, did I mention football?

Nothing is more satisfying than stuffing your face with mashed taters, turkey and watching the Dallas Cowboys stink it up on the television.

And who decided that the Cowboys have to play every Thanksgiving? If America has a designated team, it's the Green Bay Packers. I'm getting ahead of myself. That is a discussion for a different day.

Anyway, you show up at 1 p.m. You grab two full mountain-sized plates that make you wonder if you're part Viking. You go back for two plates of desserts, and you slowly fall into a food coma.

Then you hear it. Joe Buck and Troy Aikman are on your television screen talking about football. The sky opens up, and you feel like you're at the gates of heaven.

On Thanksgiving, you get not one, not two, but three NFL games. Nothing is more American than watching football with your zipper unzipped because your belly is hanging out of your pants.

It's the one day of the year where I do less walking than a toddler.

Let's move on to Christmas. Before you get mad, I like Christmas. But the holiday is too rambunctious for me. Thanksgiving is nice and relaxed. I watch football, and I gain 100 pounds.

I spent 364 days a year avoiding these people, and now I have to play catch up with their lives?

Christmas is that one holiday where the whole family gets together. You see that one cousin every three years. What's up with all these questions about my love life and grades?

Am I seeing anybody? No, Uncle Billy, I'm alone and miserable. How's school going? Well, I do get mostly As with the occasional B, but that comes at the sacrifice of my mental health.

I have to buy gifts for other people? I'm a broke college student. I can

barely afford dinner for the week.

Christmas got old once I turned 12. The fun part of Christmas was getting presents and being adored.

I enjoy Christmas music, but good lord, songs overstay their welcome. Why is "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" blared through department store speakers Nov. 1? First off, I'm in the middle of preparing for finals and projects. It is unequivocally the worst time of the year.

Also, there are no NFL games on Christmas, at least consistently. Christmas can fall on any day, so the NFL will not play a game unless it's played on Thursday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday.

This year we're getting a Christmas game. But that will only be the 20th Christmas game by the NFL since 1989.

So, I don't get yearly Christmas football games. Instead, I get asked redundant questions about my love life and school, and I have to buy someone a present?

Let us skip Christmas this year. We can have Thanksgiving twice in 2020. I can stuff my face, ignore family members and I don't have to buy gifts for anyone. It's a win-win for all of us.

BLACK FRIDAY

Continued from PAGE 7

CDC's recommendations on safety precautions.

The Westfield Citrus Park Mall is also encouraging mall goers by providing "Westfield safe elves," who will roam the mall Nov. 27 to remind customers to put on face masks and keep their distance. The mall will also be handing out complimentary face masks and closing early to avoid large crowds.

Shopping centers in and around Tampa are still motivating in-person shopping by laying out their COVID-19 provisions for those patrons who decide that the pandemic does not trump the joys of enormous crowds and holiday music on loop.

This year's Cyber Monday deals are projected to be better than any before, and surely better than Black Friday's. In 2019, U.S. Cyber Monday sales hit a new record of \$9.4 billion, 2 billion

more than in-person Black Friday sales that same year. Since so many Americans are deciding to be safe and stay home this shopping season, the pandemic is the perfect time for retailers to push for online sales.

Get your holiday shopping out of the way without the annoyance of Black Friday terrors by staying home and taking advantage of online deals. By promoting online sales over in-person ones, companies are ensuring a safe shopping experience for customers and employees.



Cyber Monday and other online sales will take over holiday shopping this year to avoid Black Friday crowds. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE



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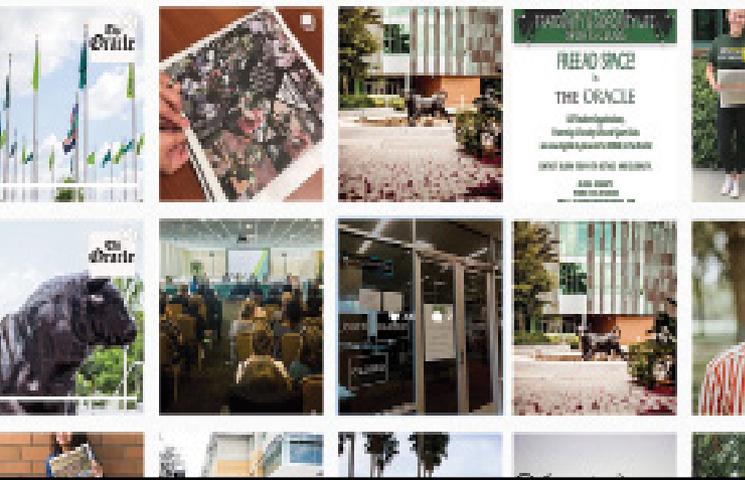
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Francisco Rosa

CORRESPONDENT

Christmas Day — a time for families to get together, parents to get some rest, children to open presents, Santa to start his vacation and for rabid basketball fans around the world to watch the best games the NBA has to offer.

NBA on Christmas Day has been a time-honored tradition in the league since 1947, the league's second season in existence. The day has historically featured the best and most intriguing games and players of a respective NBA season. Oftentimes one of the games is a rematch of the previous year's NBA Finals teams.

The first ever game that took place on Christmas in 1947 was between the New York Knicks and the now-defunct Providence Steamrollers, which the Knicks won 89-75. The NBA has continued the tradition every year except for the lockout shortened 1998-99 season.

Since that game between the Knicks and the Steamrollers, playing on Dec. 25 has become an event of tremendous magnitude and meaning for players, coaches and fans across the league. The NBA did many things to make the day stand out from other regular seasons games, picking the best matchups, storylines and even creating special jerseys for the teams that participate.

For players, in particular, it presents the opportunity to not only play the game they love on

the most popular and exclusive day of the league's calendar year, it also gives them the chance to create memories for their fans similar to the ones they have from watching Christmas Day games growing up.

"It means a lot for me personally," Boston Celtics point guard Kemba Walker said in an interview with NBC Sports Boston ahead of his first Christmas game in 2019. "I never got a chance to play on Christmas or even have this kind of notoriety. I'm definitely excited for it. As a kid, these are the kind of games you grew up watching. For me to be a part of it, is definitely a special moment."

Although it may seem to some that playing on Christmas is just like any other day of the regular season, it isn't. Much like how the NFL only broadcasts three games on Thanksgiving, the NBA is also an exclusive event on Christmas Day with just five games being spread out throughout the day.

"There's some in the league... don't get to play one Christmas game," Celtics center Enes Kanter said. "It's definitely a blessing."

That blessing can be a curse at times as well. When a player is selected to play on Christmas, they miss out on time with their families on one of the most joyous days of the year.

They're not able to be there and open gifts on Christmas morning or have special traditions with their families, because unlike many other professions across the country, NBA players will be at the office for the holiday. For that reason, NBA fans should cherish these games, because players participating are sacrificing so much precious time.

"I won't be with my family on Christmas, unfortunately,"



NBA on Christmas Day has been a longstanding tradition since 1947. Other than the playoffs and the All-Star Game, the games on Dec. 25 are what basketball fans look forward to all year. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

LeBron James, who has made 14 appearances on Christmas, said. "So, no, we have no traditions. If I can get a home game on Christmas then we'll have a tradition."

James follows a long line of all-time great players to make multiple appearances on Christmas. Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Dwyane Wade, Shaquille O'Neal and Magic Johnson are just a few of the legends to join him on that list.

Bryant, who tragically passed away earlier this year, played in perhaps the most famous Christmas Day game of all time in 2004 when the Lakers took on his former co-star O'Neal, and the Miami Heat.

After eight years, three

championships and a tumultuous relationship so toxic that it split up one of the NBA's greatest dynasties, Heat vs. Lakers 2004 was the first time O'Neal and Bryant would face off since the ugly end to their partnership.

The buildup to the match-up was unlike any other Christmas Day game that came before it, and it certainly lived up to the hype with Miami and O'Neal winning 104-102 after Bryant missed a last-second attempt to win the game.

That game set the blueprint for making the NBA an annual Christmas staple just as much as gingerbread houses, snowmen and listening to "All I Want for Christmas is You" by Mariah Carey.

After wrapping up the NBA season Oct. 11, the league recently approved a vote from the board of governors and players association to begin the season Dec. 22, an exceptionally quick turnaround between seasons. The reasoning behind the decision, per The Athletic's Shams Charania, is to preserve \$500 million of league revenue including the money made on Christmas Day, as previously mentioned, the NBA's most popular day.

Even in a year where there is so much uncertainty due to the novel coronavirus, one thing that is almost a certainty, barring any unforeseen circumstances, is that there will be basketball on Christmas Day.

NOVEMBER

CHRISTMAS TOWN

NOVEMBER 20 – JANUARY 30, 2021
BUSCH GARDENS TAMPA BAY

Millions of twinkling lights, NEW holiday fireworks, the first-ever outdoor production of Christmas On Ice and much more merriment, complete with enhanced health and safety measures, are making spirits bright this year!

YOGA AT WATER WORKS PARK
EVERY THURSDAY AT 5:30 PM
VISIT WEBSITE FOR SCHEDULE AND DIRECTIONS

TAMPA RIVERWALK PICKERS N' BREWS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Join us for another amazing weekend with a wide variety of vendors, from Rustic Décor, Vintage Finds, Local Hand-made designs, Farmhouse Collectibles, Flea Market Treasures, Upcycled, Boutique Apparel, Jewelry, Food Trucks & Live Music. Pet-Friendly.

TAMPA RIVERWALK HOLIDAY SPECTACULAR

NOVEMBER 26 – JANUARY 2, 2021
DOWNTON TAMPA RIVERWALK

Friends of the Riverwalk invites you to enjoy our Holiday Spectacular. Displays include the 35' tall LED lighted Christmas tree that floats in the harbor, several other lighted displays floating on barges in the river and the lighted garland and red bows on the Riverwalk light poles. The hotels, restaurants, and bars along the Riverwalk will also have lighted displays making the Tampa Riverwalk a wonderful place to take the family and experience the holiday season.

WINTER VILLAGE

NOVEMBER 20 – JANUARY 3, 2021
CURTIS HIXON PARK

Celebrate the holiday season in Downtown Tampa at the Winter Village at Curtis Hixon Park presented by Tampa Bay Lightning. Located along the Tampa Riverwalk, Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park is transformed with the sights, sounds and activities of the holidays for children and adults of all ages.

CHYLL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL TOUR 2020

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 9:00
AM – 11:00 PM

North 56th Street & East Busch
Boulevard Next to Winn Dixie
Food, drinks, Music, Fun, Shopping

HOLIDAY BOAT PARADE CRUISE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19
PIRATE WATER TAXI

Reserve a front row seat to Tampa's Holiday Lighted Boat Parade. Pirate Water Taxi offers the best views of the parade! Your ticket includes a 75-minute cruise with spectacular views of the boat parade and downtown Tampa. Please note, Pirate Water Taxi has two cruise times available to view the parade.

TAMPA BAY FOOD TOURS

VISIT WEBSITE FOR TOUR DATES

Enjoy food and culture on their 3.5 hour walking food, wine and craft beer tours around Tampa, Dunedin, and St. Pete.

HOLIDAY LIGHTED BOAT PARADE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 6:30 PM
TAMPA'S RIVERWALK

This FREE holiday event along the Riverwalk will include an extended route with multiple public viewing areas.

THINGS TO DO

MOONLIGHT ZIP LINE

ADVENTURES

EMPOWER ADVENTURES

Click here for dates and location.

TAMPA BAY MARKETS

Open air fresh markets.

Local Foods – Hand Crafts – Live Music

Click here for market dates and locations

SANTA'S HOLIDAY BRUNCH CRUISE

SUNDAY, DEC 13 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Yacht StarShip Dining Cruises

603 Channelside Dr, Tampa, FL 33602

TAMPA RIVERWALK HOLIDAY FEST

SATURDAY, DEC 12 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Water Works Park Tampa

Enjoy Tampa's Riverwalk! Another amazing weekend! Keeping it LOCAL, with a wide variety of vendors, food trucks, kids art areas and live music. Pet-friendly events offering pet gifts too!

DECEMBER

Successfully navigate the dinner table this Thanksgiving



After a turbulent year, Thanksgiving could make or break your mental health. There are things that you can do to make sure things go smoothly this year. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE



Nicholas Cousineau

STAFF WRITER

This could be the first year many college students will be granted a seat at the adult's table, and while you might see this as a good thing, it comes with a fair share of challenges. Similar to navigating a dangerous jungle, you'll have to find your own approach to the dreaded 2020 Thanksgiving.

With many differing views

throughout the family, avoiding awkward or downright hostile arguments with those you love most at the Thanksgiving table may be difficult.

First, check your own words to make sure you aren't saying something that could potentially trigger a political debate that ends with a slammed door and someone crying in their car. Neutral conversation topics could include a hobby that you picked up this year, the Tampa Bay Lightning winning the Stanley Cup or something that includes the phrase "binge watching." Older generations love talking about binge watching.

However, if a problematic cousin is trying to bait a

conversation about the existence of lizard people, your best bet might be to just not engage. Leave the room and try a breathing technique to quell your anger. Breathing slowly through your nose and out through your mouth deeply from your stomach rather than your chest is an excellent way to calm down your body, according to Health Line, a health and wellness blog.

If your family has decided to host a Zoom Thanksgiving this year, it might not be possible to leave the room or switch to a conversation with your cool aunt in another part of the house. Use this new medium to your advantage. No one will be able to dispute your claims that your

apartment went under a tunnel and you missed the last five minutes of conversation.

If the conversation is steering toward a government conspiracy theory, exclaiming "Shh! They could be listening," could end those conversations for the rest of the night.

If you're not able to avoid an in-person gathering this year, wear a huge mask that covers your entire face. Because USF has decided that students won't be returning after Thanksgiving break, your parents might be forcing you to attend a Thanksgiving gathering during a global pandemic. However, that doesn't mean you can't stay conscious of your health.

Whenever the conversation finds itself going in a dangerous direction, just pretend you can't hear anything through your gigantic plague doctor mask.

Above all else, remember you are very lucky if you have a family to spend Thanksgiving with. It's a luxury many don't have, and especially now we all could use a break from being in isolation. While others might use this day to push their political ideologies, take this opportunity to return to classic Thanksgiving values and give thanks for everything you have, not everything you wish you had.



**LOCATIONS:
TEMPLE TERRACE - YBOR CITY -
HYDE PARK - RIVERVIEW - WESLEY
CHAPEL - TAMPA INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT - CARROLLWOOD - WESTCHASE**



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