

Reflections on the holiday season

It seems to me that not long ago I was taking down the Christmas tree and packing away the ornaments. Now Christmas has come around once again, and it reminds me of just how quickly time flies.

As physicians we are trained to take care of our responsibilities—a duty we do well, though perhaps too well at times, as often this focus takes us away from family and friends. There's always an urgent or immediate matter that needs our attention, but I've come to learn that it's also imperative to prioritize loved ones, friends, and personal pursuits. We need to maintain a healthy work-life balance to ensure we are the best version of ourselves for our patients, for our loved ones, and most of all for ourselves.

The holidays are a great time for us to step back from our busy day-to-day professional lives and reflect on the past year. In our house, the holiday season has always been about family, about spending time with loved ones near and far—that's the best gift I could ever receive. And as children grow and branch off into their own lives with their own families, this family time becomes more important with each passing year. Our immediate family is spread across BC and New England, but, despite this, we make sure to have some time together during the holidays each year.

This is also a time of year for traditions—a time to celebrate long-lived traditions and introduce new ones. For as long as I can remember, it has been a tradition in our house to start playing Christmas carols at the stroke of midnight on 1 December. Granted, this hasn't always been received with a warm welcome, especially by sleeping children. It also wouldn't be Christmas without decorating the tree

together (and arguing about where each ornament should go) and nestling together as a family to watch our favorite Christmas movies—*Miracle on 34th Street*, Bing Crosby's *White Christmas*, and *A Christmas Story*.

And, as families grow, new traditions are adopted, created, and blended together. For us that happened a few years back with the addition of family-in-law in Boston. We now have a new tradition called the "Yankee gift swap"—a gift exchange that happens on Christmas Eve when each family member places a wrapped mystery gift in the centre of the circle and, in turn, family members choose to take either a new gift or steal one that someone else has already chosen. Pure chaos! Especially during the years of the rainbow-colored suspenders and the faux-fur muskrat hat (like the RCMP wear). This has become one of the highlights of our holiday season, with many laughs had and many memories made.

The addition of our newest family member, our 2-year-old grandson Riley, has certainly started a whole new series of traditions! We've learned from Hanukkah and now give him one present a day—much less chaotic than giving him all of his presents on Christmas morning since we all seem to spoil him rotten. And my new favorite tradition since becoming a grandparent is cuddling up with Riley on the couch to watch *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* over, and over, and over again.

The holiday season is also a time to reflect on the past year and on hopes for the coming year, and to rejuvenate. For me, I hope to finish my year as president feeling as though I have made a difference, and then to spend more time on the little joys in life. The new year will be busy, as always,

so it's important that we return to the daily craziness feeling refreshed. Whether your idea of relaxation is sitting by the fire with a good book, playing board games with family and friends, or getting out and enjoying a brisk walk or a good bike ride, make sure to take time to do the things that rejuvenate you.

However you celebrate this holiday season, and whatever the holidays mean to you, I wish you all happiness and laughter, good food, good cheer, and good time spent with those who matter most. From my family to yours, have a very happy December and a very happy holiday season.

—Bill Cavers, MD
Doctors of BC President

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