

Trick or treating a COVID threat? Make a scary Halloween fun

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Lauren Teverbaugh, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry and clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at Tulane School of Medicine, offers suggestions to help kids manage their emotions and expectations during a pandemic Halloween. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Kids want scary Halloween fun, not creepy COVID reminders.

After the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended against traditional trick or treating to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in communities,

parents and kids may be wondering how to celebrate the occasion. Is it safe to attend outdoor parties? Walk around the neighborhood in costume? Carve pumpkins with friends?

Lauren Teverbaugh, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry and clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at Tulane School of Medicine, recently spoke with Tulane University's new podcast [On Good Authority](#) to help parents and other Halloween enthusiasts know how to manage frightful emotions this Oct. 31.

DO explain the risks to children in developmentally appropriate terms. That means explaining to very young children in concrete terms: "To be safe, we can't trick or treat from door-to-door." "Being safe means we're going to wear our mask and we're going to wash our hands to protect each other." Middle-school children or older can handle more abstract notions of risk.

DO let your kids have some input into how you celebrate. If your family chooses not to participate in traditional Halloween, consider letting your child or children offer suggestions for replacement activities. Children appreciate when they have some type of control or choice in what they're doing.

DO plan ahead for Halloween, especially if you have multiple caregivers to consider. Make sure the caregivers are in agreement about how the night will unfold, and maybe have a Plan B ready in case something goes wrong — like heavy rain on an outdoor party.

DO try to empathize with your child's feelings. If a tantrum arises, parents might consider saying something like, "We don't get to go up to our friends, like we used to. I understand that must be really hard." Empathy can go a long way, Teverbaugh said.

DON'T feel like you should hover over kids who want to exercise some independence. If you and your child feel comfortable about practicing safe Halloween behavior, and it's a situation where you can step back a little bit, constant supervision is not necessarily required.

DON'T forget that a costume mask still needs a COVID-prevention mask over the mouth and nose.

DON'T despair. The pandemic will not last forever.

[Click here to listen to the full discussion and Teverbaugh's suggestions for successful celebrating.](#)