



***President's Bulletin – November 24, 2020***

***Carol Weitzman, MD***

Dear Members, Trainees & Friends,

There is something disconcerting about trying to celebrate Thanksgiving this year as the pandemic rages on and our country confronts unprecedented division and political unrest. Most of us will have smaller gatherings and empty seats at the table where our loved ones usually sit. Personally, the thought of my 90-year-old mother alone on Thanksgiving, without my father who passed away this summer, or her family around her to buoy her spirits gives me a heavy heart. Seeing the number of deaths due to COVID climb and thinking about how many we have lost this year, makes it hard to find joy in this most family-oriented holiday in America. In a holiday so defined by memories, rituals and tradition, this one seems destined to be defined by melancholy and loss.

Some people may choose to hide under the covers, eat pop tarts and postpone Thanksgiving until 2021 (somewhat of an appealing option!) But in the midst of all this upheaval, can we create a different kind of Thanksgiving experience this year? Is there a way to use the challenges of 2020 to propel us to a deeper understanding of community, interdependence and ritual, and shift this holiday from one where we traditionally eat and drink too much to creating new rituals and traditions? For those of us who enjoy the luxury of having warm homes and food on our tables, maybe we can pay closer attention to our privilege and good luck. Can we reach out to those who might be alone or lonely and would appreciate a call, or see if an elderly, ill or disabled person could use help with food shopping or cooking? Can we support local businesses who may be struggling during the pandemic? Can we find ways to thank people who have made a difference and disproportionately bore risks in our communities like essential workers? Can we donate either time or money or food to those who are challenged? Can we start different kinds of conversations this year at our smaller tables? Overall, can we find the strength and gratitude to persevere throughout these challenging times?

In ongoing work within SDBP, we have seized upon the opportunity of a new incoming administration to outline our priorities to improve the developmental and behavioral health of children, youth and their families. What emerged from a conversation on an SDBP Connect

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call quickly blossomed into a statement and op-ed, that is included in the link below. Through the deft and thoughtful work of Jason Fogler, Karen Ratliff-Schaub, Kate Wallis, Rob Keder, Robyn Mehlenbeck and me, along with valuable input from and endorsement of the SDBP Board, we have, through the use of narrative stories, captured some of the challenges of 2020 that have helped to articulate our priorities for the future.

### [SDBP Open Letter to our Nation](#)

Please feel free to read and also to share this in any way you think would be helpful. The advice we received from media and government relations is to wait to share anything until AFTER the holiday weekend. If you share it on social media, please make sure to tag SDBP. If you get it published anywhere, please let us know.



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I wish you all a holiday of joy and peace and courage that allows us to reinvigorate ourselves and continue to work towards positive interconnection and mutual support.

*Sincerely,*

Carol Weitzman, MD  
President, SDBP

