

MAKING THE SEASON MERRY

Dental Office Holiday Fun With AI Support

The holidays always bring extra energy into the office. Kids are excited, families are busy, and the season naturally lends itself to moments of connection. It's also a great time to slow down and show appreciation for the families who trust you with their care and the team that keeps everything running behind the scenes.

Hear me out: Artificial intelligence (AI) can be extremely helpful for this. AI tools can make it easier to brainstorm fun holiday activities, organize contests that kids enjoy, and devise thoughtful ways to thank patients and staff. With the right ideas, your office can feel less like a stop on a to-do list and more like a place where people feel seen, appreciated, and festive.

Using AI for creative holiday brainstorming.

AI tools are wonderful at sparking fresh ideas that might not come to mind during a busy workday, such as:

Holiday activity ideas: Themed coloring sheets, scavenger hunts around the office, or dental "elf on the shelf" variations that kids can search for during their visit.

Decor inspiration: Unique office decoration themes and ideas, like "Candy Cane Lane" or "Snowflake Forest," with patient cut-out snowflakes hanging with floss from the ceiling that turn waiting rooms into wonderlands.

Playlist curation: AI can generate fun, kid-friendly holiday playlists to play in the background and keep spirits high.

Craft stations: Set up small, supervised craft tables where kids can decorate holiday-themed toothbrush holders, make DIY reindeer masks, or assemble mini snow globes to take home.

By leaning on AI for quick brainstorming sessions, your team can keep the office fresh and exciting without spending hours trying to reinvent the wheel.

Showing gratitude to patients and families.

Families choose your office not just for dental care but also for the warmth of the experience. Around the holidays, there are special ways to say thank you that go a long way:

Take-home treats: Offer small bags of dental goodies, holiday stickers, or small festive toys.

AI-crafted poetry or messages: Use AI to help generate cheerful holiday poems or notes that you can customize and add a personal touch before sending them home.

Celebrating the holidays with your team.

Your staff works hard all year; the holidays are the perfect time to remind them how valued they are. Some creative celebration ideas include:



From all of us at the PDTA family, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful and peaceful holiday season. May your days be filled with laughter, warmth, and cherished moments. Thank you for being part of our community! Happy Holidays to you and yours!

AI-powered gift exchange themes: Use AI to brainstorm fun themes for Secret Santa or White Elephant gifts, like "cozy comfort" or "childhood throwbacks."

Staff appreciation notes: Write heartfelt messages to team members. A few genuine sentences of gratitude can mean more than any gift card.

Office holiday party ideas: AI can help plan easy, budget-friendly activities, from "holiday trivia" to themed potlucks, that keep things fun without adding stress.

Fun contests for kids in the office.

Nothing excites kids more than a chance to participate in a contest, and it's a great way to make appointments enjoyable during the holiday season. Tailor activities by age group:

For younger kids (ages 3–8):

- Holiday coloring contests (AI can generate unique templates)
- "Guess how many candy canes are in the jar" with sugar-free prizes
- Sticker scavenger hunts around the office

For older kids (ages 9–13):

- Creative writing or drawing contests ("Design a holiday toothbrush!")
- Trivia challenges about winter holidays around the world
- Social media photo challenges (with parent permission)

AI can help spark ideas and lighten the load, but what matters most is the genuine gratitude behind each activity. Whether it's a handwritten note, a creative contest, or a cozy staff gathering, these small gestures remind families and team members that they're appreciated.

From our family at PDTA to you and yours, Happy Holidays!

Rhea M. Haugrath, D.M.D.

WHISKING UP NEW TRADITIONS THIS THANKSGIVING

Fill Your Holiday With Gratitude and Games



The holidays are a magical time that brings together loved ones and a little chaos. Between the pie-making and travel plans, it can be easy to forget what we're gathering to celebrate. This Thanksgiving, let's not just carve the turkey, but also carve out some time for mindful traditions the whole family can enjoy. From sharing what you're thankful for to hosting a family Thanksgiving talent show, this year is the perfect chance to create new traditions that deepen connections and spark laughter. Get ready to gobble up the fun together.

Gather for Gratitude

Thanksgiving is all about honoring what we are grateful for in life, and it can be a fun activity for you and your children to share. You can gamify gratitude in several ways, like creating a thankfulness jar where everybody adds slips of paper describing what they

most appreciate. You can take turns reading them after dinner and even make a guessing game out of who wrote what. It could be as simple as gathering around the table for breakfast and everyone saying one thing they're grateful for.

Turkey Day Trivia

There's no better way to digest after the big Thanksgiving feast than having fun. Pick out some of your favorite board games or a deck of cards for a post-meal game night. You could test everyone's knowledge with a holiday-themed trivia competition or create a scavenger hunt around the house. No matter the game, ensure everyone from grandparents to kids can join in. Keep it focused on connection, not just winning. If you want to go all out, challenge all your guests to be ready with their best skills for a family talent show.

A Soundtrack to the Stuffing

Create a perfect soundtrack you can play while everyone helps with the cooking or winds down after dessert. Before the big day, ask everyone in the family to add one or two songs to a Thanksgiving playlist. Prompt them to pick tunes that remind them of the season, happy memories, the joys of being together, or even their favorite dishes. You can keep adding to this list in subsequent years, turning the songs into a playable family history.

SITUATION OF THE MONTH

Dear PDTA Pro,

With Thanksgiving on our minds, our team has been thinking about how grateful we are for our patients who shared our name with a friend, neighbor, coworker, or family member. Referring others to our office helps our practice grow, and we are incredibly thankful for those who helped to spread the word. What can we do to say thank you to those who refer others to our practice?

— Wanting to Say "Thanks"

Dear Wanting to Say "Thanks,"

Word-of-mouth referrals are one of the biggest compliments a dental office can receive. When a family trusts you enough to recommend your practice to a friend, it shows they value your care and believe others will benefit from it too. That deserves more than just a smile and a quick "thank you." Here are three ways to make your gratitude feel personal, memorable, and fun.

Host a Referral Contest

One of the most popular ways to show appreciation is by running a referral contest. Each time a family refers someone new, they get entered into a drawing for a prize. This can be anything from a gift card to a family-friendly experience like movie

tickets or a local attraction. The excitement grows when you announce the winner on social media (with their permission)! You could also host a quarterly referral contest with the winner being the family who refers the most families, second place, etc., to encourage lots of referrals! This is not a drawing, but tracking referring families over a month, six weeks, whatever the practice chooses as the timeline.

Surprise With Small Tokens of Appreciation

Little unexpected gestures can go a long way. A branded tote bag, a coffee gift card, or even a holiday ornament with your office logo and a handwritten card from the doctor can be a thank-you and a fun reminder of your practice.

Celebrate Referrals Publicly

With permission, give shout-outs to referring families on your office bulletin board, newsletter, or social media. Public recognition creates a sense of community and encourages others to participate.

By celebrating referrals in creative ways, you're not only saying thank you; you're strengthening relationships and building a practice that families are proud to share.

We hope this helps!

— Pediatric Pro

CLEAN CLASSICS

RETRO REMEDIES FOR A RADIANT HOME

Today's home makeover marketplace is full of high-tech goods and gadgets designed to keep your spaces clean. However, looking to the distant past reveals plenty of practical (and, in many cases, less expensive) options to bring your pad back to perfection. Here are three vintage cleaning tips that still work well today.

Markers are no match for rubbing alcohol.

Most parents encourage their children to explore their artistic side. Still, the possibility of your little ones becoming future Picassos can become problematic if they use markers to turn your refrigerator, countertops, walls, or other nonporous surfaces into makeshift art galleries. Instead of shrieking in horror upon discovering their creations, reach for rubbing alcohol and apply it to a cloth. Rubbing the fabric on the scribbles will dissolve the pigments, making it easier to restore your child's ad-hoc canvas to its original, clean condition. Of course, you may want to snap a few photos of your child's art before wiping it away — and consider purchasing more appropriate things for them to draw on!

Mint will suppress summer stink.

Although the air tends to cool off this time of year, summer will be here again before we know it. If heat and humidity make your garbage

cans stink to high heaven, you can find the answer to overcoming the odor in your garden. Grow or purchase fresh mint and place a sprig in each can daily. You'll be amazed by how quickly the stench goes away.

Tidy pet hair without time travel.

Pets bring joy and companionship to our lives, but their hair can do a real number on our rugs and upholstery. Interestingly, the secret to purging pet hair emerged nearly 80 years ago. In the May 1946 issue of *Better Homes & Gardens*, a reader recommended rubbing a wet rubber sponge on the affected areas — a process that rolls up the hair into easy-to-remove balls. A writer from the magazine decided to test this method last year — and the decades-old directions still did the trick.



HAVE A LAUGH

**When something's rad,
but not too rad ...**



Something's up

**The farmer just unfriended
me on Facebook**



SLOW COOKER BRISKET



INGREDIENTS

Inspired by ThePioneerWoman.com

- 1 (1-oz) envelope onion soup mix
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 3-lb piece of beef brisket (flat cut)
- 8 fresh thyme sprigs
- 8 whole garlic cloves
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 lb carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 lb baby golden potatoes
- 3 celery stalks, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 large sweet onion, cut into 8 wedges
- 2 1/2 cups beef stock
- 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp cornstarch

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, combine soup mix, sugar, salt, and pepper. Sprinkle over brisket.
2. Place meat, fat cap side down, into an 8-qt slow cooker.
3. Top brisket with thyme, garlic, bay leaves, carrots, potatoes, celery, and onion.
4. Whisk stock, Worcestershire sauce, and cornstarch until fully dissolved. Add to slow cooker.
5. Cover and cook on high for 5–6 hours until tender.
6. Remove to a cutting board, fat side up. Remove thyme and bay leaves.
7. Thinly slice brisket against the grain.
8. Serve with vegetables, drizzled with gravy from the slow cooker.

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LESS SCROLLING, MORE STROLLING

THE CASE FOR A DAILY WALK

As the temperatures dip and daylight starts to dwindle sooner in the evenings, staying active often falls to the bottom of the priority list. It's easy to settle into the routine of indoor comfort with more screens and less movement. However, carving out time for a daily walk, even in the chillier months, is a simple and effective way to stay physically and mentally sharp.

Fall and winter are nature's underrated workout months.

There's something calming about a quiet sidewalk covered in fall leaves or a peaceful neighborhood dusted with frost. The colder seasons offer a refreshing and grounding change of scenery. A short walk outdoors allows you to unplug and take in the subtle beauty that's easy to miss when you're rushing from one indoor task to the next.

The science of seasonal movement is real.

Cooler air does more than wake you up. It makes your body work harder to stay warm, thus increasing the calorie burn of even a casual stroll. That quick burst of movement in the cold can also boost circulation, improve energy levels, and clear mental fog, especially if you've been sitting at a desk for most of the day.

Create a cozy routine you look forward to.

One of the best ways to stay consistent during these cooler months is to make your walk enjoyable. Layer up in comfortable gear, choose a playlist or podcast you love, and set a daily reminder to step outside. Whether it's 10 minutes around the block or a long weekend loop, consistency matters more than intensity.



Make it social, rewarding, or both.

If you aren't feeling motivated solo, ask a friend or neighbor to join you a few times a week. If you prefer going alone, add a small reward: a stop for a warm drink, or the satisfaction of checking it off your daily goals list. These little incentives can make your walk something to look forward to.