

Cultivating Connections: Rituals Boost Happiness and Connection

Thanksgiving is coming quickly and it isn't just about food — it's also about the traditions that bring us closer and make us feel good. Your rituals can be powerful boosters for your well-being.

Sitting around the table, passing dishes, and enjoying favorite recipes reminds us that we belong to something bigger than ourselves. That sense of belonging lowers stress and gives us a stronger feeling of support.

Another tradition is expressing gratitude. Many families go around the table and say one thing they're thankful for. Studies show that naming our blessings — even small ones like cozy socks or a sunny day — can boost happiness and shift our focus away from daily worries.

Even playful traditions, like watching the football game, tuning into the parade, or taking a group walk after dinner, strengthen bonds and create memories.

Even if you're spending the holiday on your own, you can still benefit. Calling a loved one, joining a community meal, or starting a solo tradition — like writing a gratitude list or taking a reflective walk — can bring the same feelings of connection and calm.

This Thanksgiving, lean into your traditions, big or small, shared or solo. Simple traditions like sharing, gratitude, and connection can lower stress and lift your mood.

Try It This Week: Get Ready for the Holiday with 3 Simple Activities



- **Schedule Connection Time:** Reach out now to plan a call or gathering, so you have something to look forward to.
- **Plan a Gratitude Ritual:** Write a few prompts to share at dinner or over a video call.
- **Choose a Tradition to Honor:** Parade, football, a walk, old photos, etc. — mark it on your calendar and let guests know.

Benefits Buzz: Employee Assistance Program



Support and advice for every step of the way

All health plans offered to state employees and their dependents have employee assistance programs (EAPs). During those moments when you feel overwhelmed, your EAP is here for you with real-life tips, tools, articles, webinars, and links to helpful resources.

As always, your EAP is private, confidential, and included as part of your benefits. Visit [DHRM's EAP webpage](#) for more details, including contacts for your EAP.

Not covered by a state health plan? See the attachment to learn more about your EAP.

[Learn more about EAP](#)

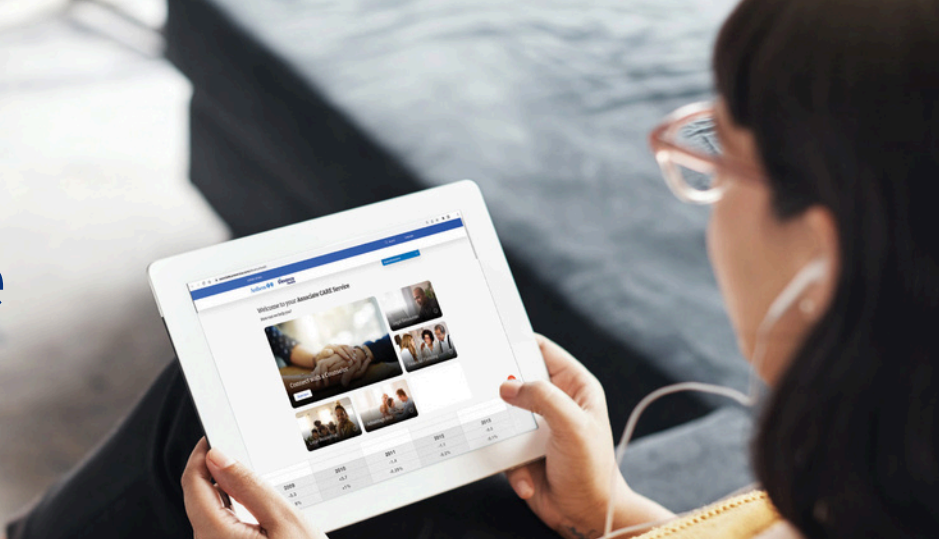


Connect with Us

Visit: commonhealth.virginia.gov | Email: wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov



Your Employee Assistance Program



During those moments when you feel overwhelmed, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is here for you with real-life tips, tools, articles, webinars, and links to helpful resources. As always, your EAP is private, confidential, and included as part of your benefits.¹ EAP is available to all Commonwealth of Virginia employees and household members or dependents, even if you're not enrolled in an Anthem medical Plan.

Support and advice for every step of the way



Counseling

Connect with a mental health professional for a variety of matters, including in moments of crisis. In-person and virtual options are available. Virtual options are offered through Headway, Talkspace or LiveHealth Online.²



Legal resources

Access online resources and legal help in-person or by phone for each issue, each year, at no added cost.³ You or eligible family members can call EAP and request a consultation for each separate issue, with a network attorney at no cost.



Work-life resources

Find resources for career, parenting, healthy communication, and balancing work and family.



Self-paced courses and resources

Emotional Well-being resources connect you to one-on-one coaching, self-help digital tools and access to articles, podcasts, and webinars for help with depression, anxiety, relationships, and alcohol use.



Financial planning

Talk with a professional and find resources that can help you take charge of your finances.



Self-assessments

Take self-assessments to get personalized recommendations on the best resources for your needs.



Connect to resources anytime

For questions or issues, you have access to your EAP 24/7. Contact your EAP by calling **855-223-9277** or visit **anthemeap.com/cova**.



¹ In accordance with federal and state law, and professional ethical standards.

² Appointments are subject to the availability of a therapist. Online counseling is not appropriate for all kinds of issues. If you are in crisis or having suicidal thoughts, it's important that you seek help immediately. Please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7 at 988, or dial 911 for help. If your issue is an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

³ Excludes business, benefits, or employment issues. The free half-hour consultations apply per legal issue, per year. You are eligible for a new consultation for each new issue yearly. If you have Anthem health coverage, your cost for a visit may be similar to what you would pay for an office therapy visit, depending on your benefits, copay, or percentage of the cost. If you're not covered by an Anthem plan, you'll be responsible for paying the full cost for a visit.

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In addition to using a telehealth service, you can receive in-person or virtual care from your own doctor or another healthcare provider in your plan's network. If you receive care from a doctor or healthcare provider not in your plan's network, your share of the costs may be higher. You may also receive a bill for any charges not covered by your health plan.

LiveHealth Online is offered through an arrangement with Amwell, a separate company, providing telehealth services on behalf of your health plan.

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