

A guide to emotional well-being for families as the calendar turns

COVID-19 has upended family life for millions around the world. Kitchen tables have become offices. Dens, playrooms and spare rooms have become classrooms. Access to gyms, movie theatres and sporting events has been limited. And as this tumultuous year draws to a close, parents are wondering how their families will be able to safely celebrate Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Diwali, Christmas and New Year's Eve. As you navigate uncertain times, here are some tips for nurturing your family's well-being — and your own.^{9,10,11,12}

1. Get guidance so you can help and support your family.

As well as helping you address your own stresses, a behavioural therapist, counsellor or Wysa Human Coach can also help you address and help resolve issues your children or ageing parents might be facing. Coaches and counsellors will be able to help you identify the times when apps such as Wysa and Pzizz can be useful to your family members – for example, if they're looking for help relaxing or getting quality sleep. They can also guide you if you're supporting children through more serious issues such as eating disorders, bullying, and chronic anxiety, which require professional intervention.

2. Talk to your children. It's important that your children, tweens and teens know that they can always turn to you for understanding and support. Children also need to know when it's time to seek support and medical care. Apps like Wysa provide a safe place for children to talk about their feelings and worries with a chatbot, which can be very therapeutic. Practising mindfulness may also help children build coping mechanisms. The anonymous chatbot also gives teens a safe space to vent their feelings. And also gives them access to a collection of fun, relaxing and informative tools that promote well-being.

3. Acknowledge reality — but don't be consumed by it. Talk candidly about how family members are feeling at this time, but don't let COVID-19 dominate your lives. And limit everyone's exposure to news reports about circumstances and uncertainty that might cause distress.

*For those eligible for vHealth

4. Carve out family time and stay connected to friends.

Put work and school aside each evening and enjoy time together. But also recognise that family members may be experiencing too much togetherness when no one ever leaves the house for school or work. Children and adults alike need human connections beyond the immediate family. Use phone and video calls, social media and outdoor get-togethers to maintain these vital connections.

5. Get outside. Exercise and exposure to vitamin D from sunlight can boost both your immune system and your mood. Even when the days are short and cold, make time for outdoor activities.^{13,14,15,16}

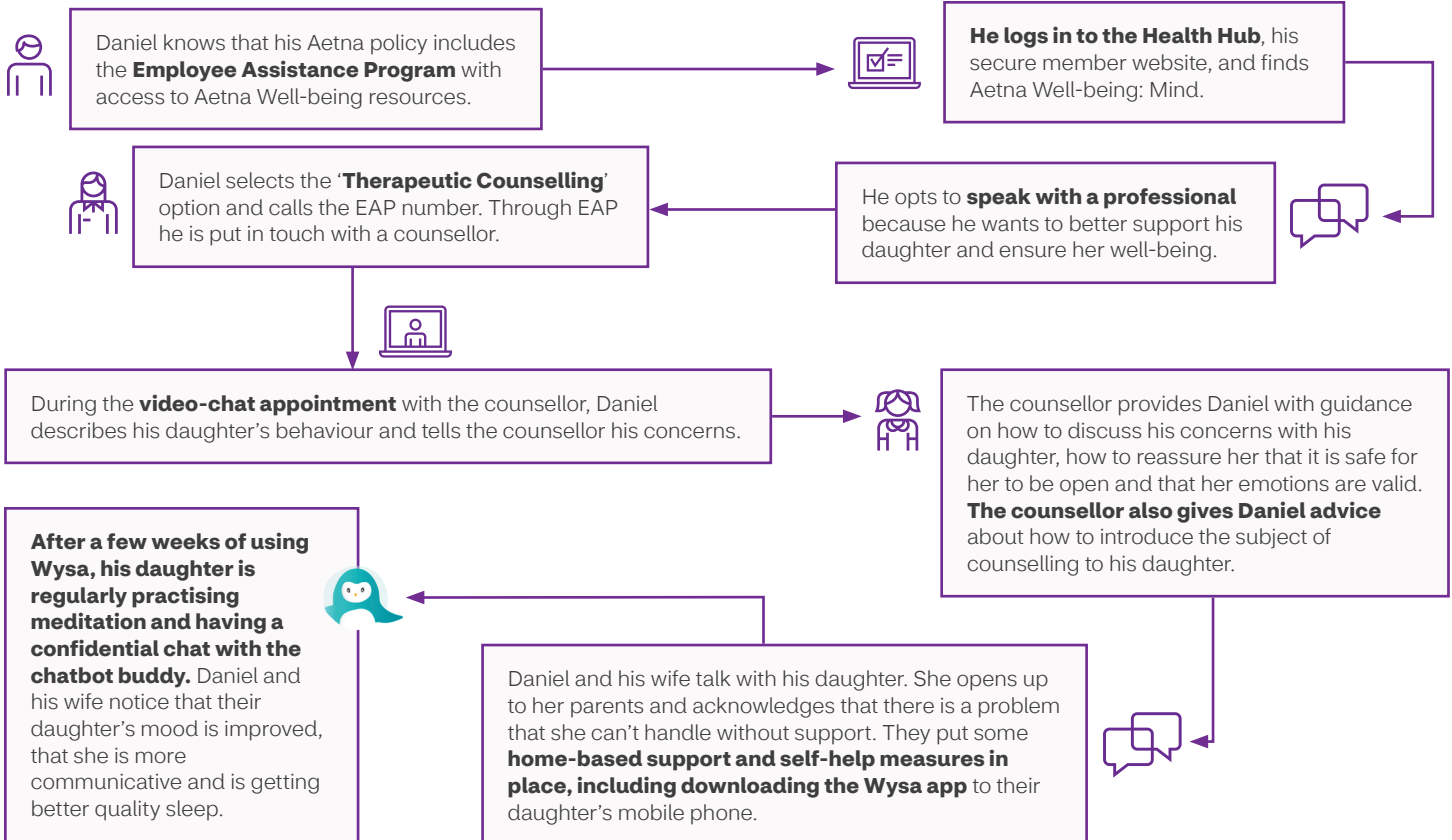
6. Decide what's important at the holidays. Have each family member name one tradition that is essential to them, then find a way to adapt it. If making Christmas treats with Grandma is important to your daughter, hold a Zoom cooking session, then exchange treats by post/mail.

7. Create new traditions. Don't just focus on loss; think about what you can gain at this time. Imagine having a midweek family movie morning, something that would be unimaginable during ordinary times.

8. Seek help when you need it. Aetna International members have access to such support tools as vHealth visits*, the Wysa well-being app and therapeutic counselling through the Employee Assistance Program. Login to the Health Hub and visit the Mind Well-being section. To learn more about these resources and find additional resources, including information on anxiety and depression, login to the Health Hub and visit the Mind Well-being section.

How Aetna Well-being can help.

52-year-old Daniel lives in Toronto with his family. He is worried about the mental well-being of his teenage daughter. She has been increasingly withdrawn, anxious and pale.



Do you need help?

As an Aetna International member, you can call us using the number on the back of your member ID card. Login to the [Health Hub](#), your secure member website, to find out more about vHealth*, to contact the Aetna CARE team to ask health care questions or to search our directory of in-network hospitals or clinics. Download the [vHealth by Aetna](#) app. In Dubai? Download the [vHealth \(Dubai\) app](#), contact the tollfree number on 8000 35704672 or email support@vhealth.co.ae. In Thailand? Download the [vHealth \(Thailand\) app](#). A member in the U.S.? [Get free access to Teladoc](#). To download Wysa for free, access therapeutic counselling through the Employee Assistance Program, or take advantage of member offer discounts, login to the Health Hub and visit the Aetna Well-being: Mind section. For more information about your health care and well-being benefits, contact your plan sponsor.

You're not alone. Getting help today makes for a better tomorrow.

Mental health resources: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/workplace-mental-health-support-resource.html>

Health Hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>

*For those eligible for vHealth | All vHealth apps (vHealth by Aetna, vHealth (Dubai) and vHealth (Thailand) can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play.

9 <https://www.connecticutchildrens.org/coronavirus/managing-family-stress-during-covid-19/>
10 <https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>
11 <https://childmind.org/article/supporting-teenagers-and-young-adults-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>
12 <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/parenting-during-coronavirus.htm>

13 <https://www.health.com/fitness/does-exercise-boost-immunity>
14 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/exercise-intensity/art-20046887>
15 <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007165.htm>
16 <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/nutrition-and-immunity/>