

EAP Connections

A newsletter for employees
served by Sutter EAP



New Traditions for a Pandemic Holiday Season

What is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

Sutter EAP provides employees and family members referrals to licensed, professional therapists. Our network of experienced therapists can help with personal problems that may impact your job, relationships or overall well-being.

- **There is no charge to you!**
- **Confidential!**

Call **800-477-2258** to learn more about your benefit.

The foods, the decorations, the music, the traditions, and most of all, the gathering of family and friends make the holiday season one of the most joyous times of the year. At the same time, holidays can also be stressful.

This year, the season is looking quite different due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traveling and big groups are out. Local and intimate is in. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends re-imagining your favorite holiday traditions by honestly evaluating activities by the level of risk.

1. Higher risk activities: Going shopping in crowded stores, attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household, which can include church and sharing foods buffet style.

2. Moderate risk activities: Inviting family and friends who live in your area to a small outdoor dinner, holiday shopping during non-busy times, and enjoying outdoor not-crowded events with people in your community, such as checking out seasonal home decorations and holiday lights.

3. Lower risk activities: Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household, taking part in virtual gatherings online, and watching sports events, parades, and holiday movies from home.

If you do plan to take part in one of the higher risk activities, such as going to an in-person holiday gathering with people outside of your home, the CDC recommends first avoiding contact with people outside of your household for 14 days before the activity and 14 days after. You don't want to bring the virus as an uninvited guest to your event or take it home with you.

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RESOURCES TO BRING YOU HOLIDAY PEACE

The Sutter Health Employee Assistance Program has many resources on its website, including pre-recorded webinars on managing stress and anxiety. Check out the Stress Busters Part 1 and Part 2 videos under the COVID-19 resources at sutterhealth.org/eap. These are free and available to all.

Also, Sutter EAP offers employee well-being workshops on Mindfulness & Meditation, Life Balance, Food & Mood, Practicing Gratitude, Sleep, Finances, Managing Holiday Blues, and more.

Call 800-477-2258 to learn about these services.

Other tips for minimizing risk when out and about include wearing masks and maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet or more from people you don't live with. This can be incredibly hard in public restrooms and eating areas. Make your seasonal outings short, so you don't need to stop for food or a bathroom break. For further reading and other recommendations from the CDC, visit: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html)

Creating Happy Holiday Memories

Creating happy holiday memories doesn't have to mean tracking down the perfect gifts, creating an Instagram-worthy holiday dinner or impressing everyone with a beautifully decorated home. This year is unusual, and there is space and grace to be human.

Recognize that family members and friends may each process this unusual year in their own way. Here are some tips to reduce holiday stress and enjoy a season of peace in your home:

- Use a positive approach when stating a concern. "It makes me happy when you help me get ready for the holiday dinner, and I love it when you help me clean up after."
- Be constructive, not critical. If one family member wants to host the usual family gathering, but another doesn't feel it is safe, consider if there is a compromise like gathering outdoors that would work for both.
- Recognize when a problem may be bigger than you can solve on your own. Addictions, depression, financial stress, and relationship issues often worsen during the holidays in an average year. This year is extraordinary. Seek out help if you need it.

Through Sutter EAP, eligible individuals can access services with a licensed mental health professional for issues from finances to family relationships and mental health. To determine eligibility and access services, call **800-477-2258**, 24/7, or visit sutterhealth.org/eap. All services are confidential and free for you.