



Talk it out

Communication during the holidays

Aetna Resources For LivingSM

Holiday gatherings will be small this year. Or, they may even take place over video-chat platforms. However you get together with loved ones, practice good communication skills.

Effective listening

Here's how you can be an effective listener:

- **Focus:** Pay attention to what someone is saying. Try your best not to think about other things when a family member is talking to you.
- **Be patient:** Accept and have respect for what the other person is sharing. You're not truly listening if you're being judgmental or defensive. Have an open mind and hear the other person out.
- **Rephrase:** This is a way to check your understanding of what's being said to you. You can say things like, "Do you mean..." and then rephrase the message in your own words. You can say something like "Did I get that right?" at the end.
- **Be sensitive:** Pay attention to the feelings being shared, as well as the words said. This means being sensitive to what's not being said while talking. It's important to be understanding about the way family members feel.

Effective expression

Good communication includes expressing yourself as well as listening. To express your thoughts and feelings, you need to listen to yourself first. Ask yourself:

- “What am I really feeling right now?”
- “What do I really think about this issue?”
- “How can I best get my point across?”

Try using I-statements instead of you-statements. You might say, “I’d like to spend this holiday at home this year so we don’t have to travel and risk catching COVID.” This message is better than a you-statement like “You can’t expect me to always go to your family for the holidays.”

The you-statement can seem like an attack and the listener may become defensive. I-statements are more likely to keep communication open.

Call us when you need help finding the right words. We’re here for you any day, any time.



Aetna Resources For LivingSM is the brand name used for products and services offered through the Aetna group of subsidiary companies. The EAP is administered by Aetna Behavioral Health, LLC and in California for Knox-Keene plans, Aetna Health of California, Inc. and Health and Human Resources Center, Inc.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law. EAP instructors, educators and participating providers are independent contractors and are not agents of Aetna. Provider participation may change without notice. For more information about Aetna plans, go to [aetna.com](https://www.aetna.com).