



Los Angeles County
Office of Education

Employee Assistance
Service for Education

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Employee Assistance Service for Education

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EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

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(800) 882-1341

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MESSAGE FROM EASE

As we welcome the month of November, we also welcome a truly special season and holiday - Thanksgiving! It is a time when we can refocus and practice gratitude and thankfulness. Thanksgiving is a tradition where we get the opportunity to be thankful for what we have in life. Given the circumstances of our country, these things may feel pretty different this year. Difficult times can bring us back to the basics in having a deep sense of appreciation for our health, loved ones, work, social interactions, or simply life in general.

The power of gratitude and our traditions around this is what makes Thanksgiving so special. Gratitude can be a powerful tool for resilience in the face of the pandemic. Reflecting on gratitude in the midst of struggle, allows one to see strengths and richness in our lives that we didn't see before. Nothing beats a thankful heart and it is the perfect occasion to let your heart speak for all the things that you are grateful for. Being grateful is so much more than just saying thank you. Cultivating gratitude in your daily life has wonderful mental and physical health benefits. Being thankful develops a positive mindset, especially when practiced everyday. Practicing gratitude makes you happier as you create awareness of the good there is in each moment.

There is no denying that Thanksgiving is going to look a lot different this year. "Different" doesn't have to be negative nor does it mean that we should not celebrate and experience the spirit of the holiday. This year, be intentional about your Thanksgiving plan and focus on keeping everyone safe and healthy. Be creative and safe in how you celebrate and experience the goodness of the season.

Happy Thanksgiving from the EASE Office!

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE DURING THE PANDEMIC

While we continue to live through unprecedented times, many of us have felt the weight of additional stress and uncertainty in our daily lives. Stress that is influenced by our fear of getting sick, loss of income, balancing learning to work at home and caring for our children, and concerns over changes occurring in our communities. Additionally, our media consumption experiences can contribute greatly to these feelings of stress and anxiety as we refer to social media or television for news coverage. As we experience these feelings, we may not immediately think about the impact that our layered stressors have on our family. These feelings can be passed down to members of our household and our children as they sense our fear and feelings of worry. Rather than watching the news, discussing headlines in the local paper, and consuming information from social media, what if we took the time to be grateful for the new world that we have discovered as part of social distancing? What if we pause to appreciate how changes in our traditions have allowed us to become more creative in the ways we celebrate? What if we took a moment to recognize how staying home has provided us with the opportunity to spend more time together? Throughout this time of physical disconnect, many have engaged in activities alone and with those in our household. Many have reconnected on deeper levels with our loved ones and established stronger bonds - bonds that we may not have had the opportunity to focus on before the pandemic. We have taught friends, family members, our grandparents, our teachers and our students how to use Zoom or FaceTime so that we could maintain close relationships while staying safely apart. For many, the pandemic has allowed us to explore new hobbies and talents and reconnect with long-distance relatives. These are only a few things that we have learned and been able to do during the most of uncertain times.

According to Harvard Health, gratitude is the thankful appreciation for what we have received, whether tangible or intangible. It allows you to acknowledge the goodness in your life and recognize that the source of that goodness lies partially outside of you. As a result, practicing gratitude helps you to connect to something larger than yourself - whether that be to people, nature or a higher power. Instead of focusing all our energy on the negativity of the pandemic, perhaps we need to take the time to be grateful for those things we have gained. While we are experiencing the loss of our traditions and daily routines, we are also experiencing an increased appreciation for those things. We have learned to embrace the importance of family gatherings, graduations, concerts, our commutes and in person schooling. It has also allowed us to appreciate the work that first responders and teachers do every day. Take this time to practice gratitude at home and with your family. At dinner, discuss events of the day and encourage every person at the table to share an aspect of their day that they are grateful for. You can also use that time to ask everyone what the pandemic has taught them to appreciate. You may be surprised to hear how much there is to be grateful for, even during these trying times.

<https://www.today.com/food/cdc-has-issued-guidelines-how-celebrate-thanksgiving-safely-year-t1192972>
<https://youthfirstinc.org/finding-gratitude-amidst-a-pandemic/>
<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/thanksgiving-ideas/g34450121/quarantine-thanksgiving-ideas/>



How to Safely Host Thanksgiving

This month we celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving, a time when friends and family come together to celebrate and express gratitude. Although, with guidelines still in place for physical distancing, we continue to find ourselves making adjustments to our traditions. We understand that these changes are difficult and may even contribute to your thoughts and feelings surrounding the holidays this year, but our annual day of thanks doesn't have to be a bore. We've compiled a list of ways to celebrate Thanksgiving this year without putting yourself and others at risk.

- Starting your day with a filling fall breakfast!
- Watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade from home.
- Decorate for the season and add festive touches to your home to lift your spirits!
- Light a fall candle and relax at home as your Turkey cooks in the oven.
- Enjoy the fresh air outside and play an outdoor game (e.g., bean bag toss).
- Make Thanksgiving arts and crafts with the little ones to keep them occupied.
- Involve other household members in the cooking!
- Answer festive questions with your family (e.g., What's a new family tradition to try?)
- Create a "gratitude" jar where everyone can write down things they're grateful for and read them.
- Planning a small and special dinner with people in your own household.
- Planning a virtual dinner with family and friends who are not present.
- Preparing food for family and neighbors (especially those at higher risk) and delivering it to them without close physical contact.
- Review old memories or photo albums and tell family stories.

TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.
(800) 882 1341