

INSIDE

**Dr. Rollinger on Staying
Healthy During COVID-19**

Move to Improve Your Mood

Take a Deep 4-7-8 Breath

Heat or Ice? It All Depends

Biscotti with Bite

Michael Turner, Former SSgt, USAF Reserve,
and Crystal Turner, MSgt, USAF (Ret.) with Wade and Finley


**US FAMILY
HEALTH PLAN**

U

fall calendar

SEPTEMBER

★
September is Suicide Prevention Month

7
Labor Day

11
Patriot Day

18
U.S. Air Force Birthday
Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown

22
Autumn begins

27
Yom Kippur begins at sundown

OCTOBER

12
Columbus Day

13
U.S. Navy Birthday

31
Halloween

NOVEMBER

1
Daylight Saving Time ends

10
U.S. Marine Corps Birthday

11
Veterans Day Observed

26
Thanksgiving Day

DECEMBER

7
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

10
Hanukkah begins at sundown

21
Winter begins

25
Christmas Day

31
New Year's Eve

FITNESS



PAGE 5 Moving as a mood elevator **PAGE 6** The link between physical activity and reduced cancer risk

WELLNESS



PAGE 4 Dr. Rollinger on staying healthy during the pandemic **PAGE 7** Take a deep 4-7-8 breath **PAGE 8** Reducing Alzheimer's risk **PAGE 9** It's time for flu shots **PAGE 10** Overcoming caution fatigue **PAGE 12** Have you tried baking biscotti?

COMMUNITY



PAGE 2 Adjusting to the changes in our lives: a message from Gail Schlesinger **PAGE 3** Sensational Member Satisfaction ratings again!

US Family Health Plan members choose from a network of over 2,000 civilian primary care providers and thousands of specialists, plus a large network of civilian hospitals.

Who We Are

US Family Health Plan of Southern New England is a Department of Defense TRICARE Prime option, and one of six regional US Family Health Plan programs across the nation. Our large network of civilian doctors, hospitals, and other health providers serves Plan members who live in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and parts of southern New Hampshire and northern Connecticut.

We pride ourselves on friendly, personal service. If you have questions, call us at **1.800.818.8589**. You can also get to know us better at **usfamilyhealth.org** or at **facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland**.



Learning from Aunt Jean

I write this just as my husband and I have returned from visiting his 99-year-old aunt for the first time since late February. She is in an assisted living center in Connecticut. Like most facilities, this one closed to outside visitors soon after the coronavirus pandemic began. For several months, all of the residents were restricted to their rooms, so they weren't able to move freely throughout the facility.

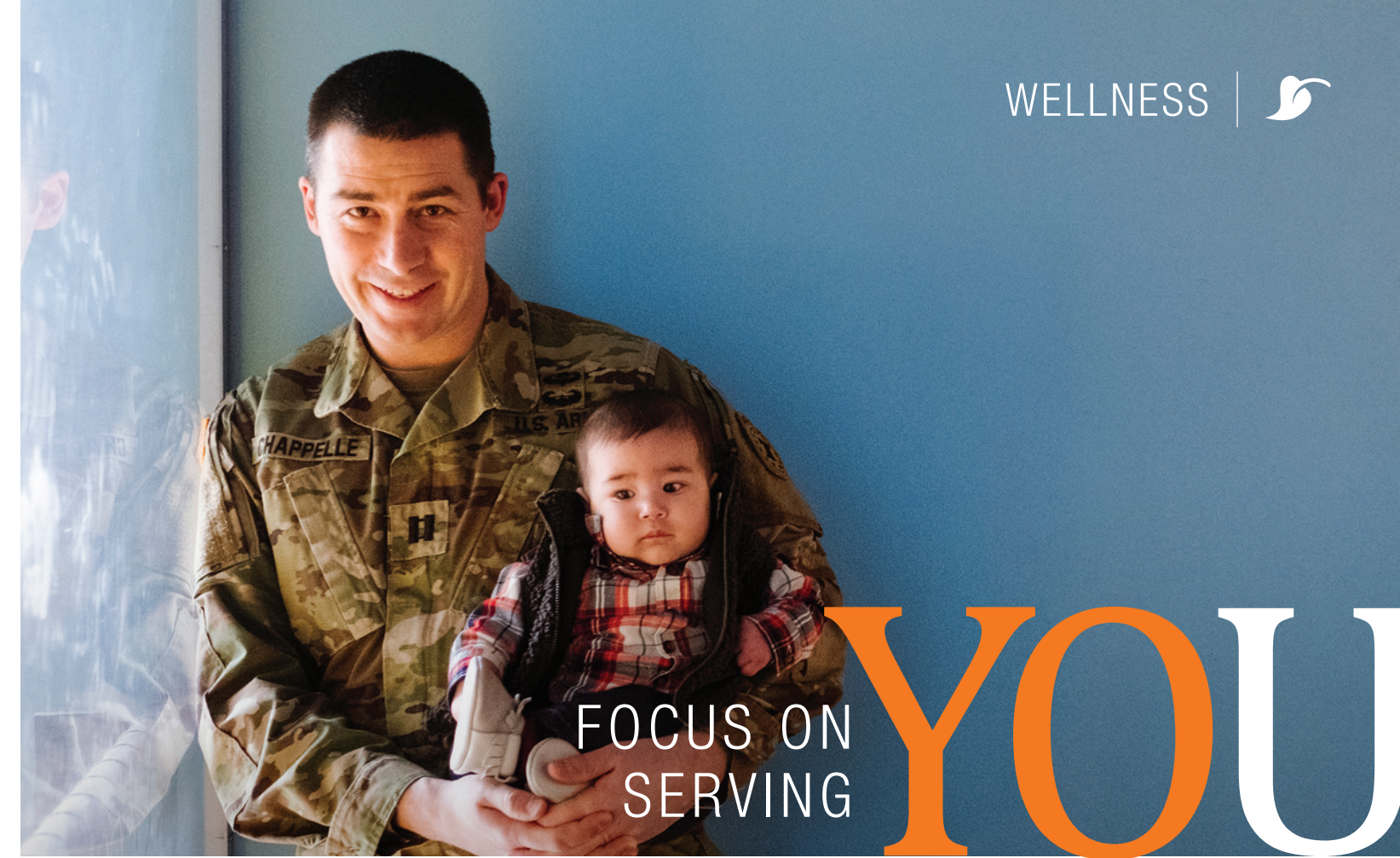
As we sat with her in the garden with our masks on, six feet apart, we asked her how she coped with the isolation and the changes during those long days. She told us that she relied on her mother's advice from long ago concerning situations you might not like but can't change: "accept and move on." Thinking about her life and all she has lived through — the Great Depression, a world war, the loss of many friends and family — I know she has relied on this advice over and over again. These, I believe, are very wise words, and very pertinent to the situation we all find ourselves in today.

There are many adjustments we have all had to make in our lives during this pandemic. However, once

you accept them, you can move on to see that there are so many things that you can still do. For me, not being able to hug my kids and my friends has been really hard, but I now so treasure just being able to talk with them. I also find myself noticing things in my environment that I am sure I would have overlooked had I not been forced to slow down a bit, like the rabbit family that I now know are the ones who eat my flowers every year, the mother deer and her fawn who live in the woods behind my house, and the baby bird in a nest in one of the shrubs in our yard.

These times are very challenging for all of us and it's very easy to dwell on the negative impacts the pandemic has had on all of us. I hope that each of you can find a way to accept this and move on and find some joy in your life. However, if you need assistance with your medical care or find yourself needing someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to contact us. Your health and well-being are of the utmost importance to us and we will help in any way we can. ■

Her mother's advice from long ago concerning situations you might not like but can't change: "accept and move on."



Open Season Doesn't Affect Current Members

In 2017, federal legislation created an annual Open Season period for all TRICARE beneficiaries. This year, Open Season will take place from November 9 through December 14, 2020, for the 2021 Plan Year (January 1 through December 31).

If you are currently enrolled in US Family Health Plan, you will be automatically re-enrolled in US Family Health Plan for the coming year. This means you don't need to do anything during the Open Season period. However, if you want to change your TRICARE coverage for 2021, you must make this change during Open Season. You may also make a change to your TRICARE coverage when you experience a Qualifying Life Event (QLE), such as marriage, divorce, retirement, or having a baby. For a current list of QLEs, go to [Tricare.mil/LifeEvents](https://www.tricare.mil/LifeEvents).

Sensational Member Satisfaction!

Warm thanks to members who participated in the 2020 CAHPS® survey of adult health plans in the U.S. Although pandemic-related disruptions to the survey mean that the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality didn't report specific percentiles this year, the agency does report that US Family Health Plan received among the highest ratings for member satisfaction, as we have for so many years.

Updates to Provider Search Tool

To make locating a network primary care provider or specialist easier for you, we've updated the Provider Search Tool on our Member Portal. You can still access the Member Portal by going to [usfamilyhealth.org](https://www.usfamilyhealth.org), then "For Members," then "Member Portal." Two special notes:

- Be sure to type the name of the city or town in which you want to find a doctor in the search box at the upper right.
- Because physicians may have admitting privileges at several hospitals, some in-network and some not, please click on "admitting privileges" to make certain that you see the in-network affiliation. (We are working to make this clearer in the tool).

And remember, Member Services at **800.818.8589** is happy to help you.



Charles Rollinger, MD, is our Vice President of Medical Management and Quality

Staying Healthy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

We are now months into the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be concerned about contracting the virus. Many people are delaying care for medical conditions or prevention unnecessarily. They don't want to go into a doctor's office or hospital for fear of catching the virus.

It's important to know that doctors and health care facilities are aware of this fear and are following guidelines to reduce the risk that patients will be exposed to the virus. It's also important to know that there are alternatives to face-to-face visits for some treatments.

The basics

Here are some key things to keep in mind as you work with your health care providers to stay healthy during this time:

Telehealth

Many in-network primary care providers, including behavioral health providers, are offering telephone or video consultations, called "telehealth." Please ask your provider if this option is available. If it isn't, or if you have an urgent, non-emergency health concern (for example, a rash or urinary tract infection) outside of your doctor's usual hours, you may use Teladoc® virtual health care to supplement your in-network

care. Teladoc is also available for behavioral concerns. If you have questions about Teladoc, call **1.800.835.2362**.

Routine immunizations

We are now entering the flu season and it's important to get your flu shot. Some providers are offering a drive-through option. Drive-through immunizations can also help you keep your children up to date on their immunizations while reducing the risk that they will catch an illness from another child in the doctor's office.

Colon-cancer screenings

Screening colonoscopies are less likely to take place during this time because doctors are prioritizing patients with illnesses. An alternative test, a stool test called Cologuard®, can be used to help rule out colon cancer for patients who have no symptoms. The test is good for three years if the results are negative, but it requires a follow-up colonoscopy if the results are positive.

Mammograms

Mammograms are still important tools for breast cancer screening. Most facilities are continuing to provide screening mammograms, but they are reducing the risk of virus transmittal by scheduling patients in a way that limits their contact with others

in waiting areas. The Department of Public Health also mandates that the radiology area be thoroughly cleaned between patients.

Blood tests

Laboratories are open for blood draws. They are reducing the risk of contagion by scheduling patients and not allowing walk-in visits. To avoid having patients sit in waiting rooms, some labs are asking patients to wait in their cars until they are called on their cell phone and asked to come in.

Chronic conditions

If you have a chronic condition such as high blood pressure or diabetes, it's important to continue to monitor your health. If you don't have a glucometer (a blood-sugar meter) ask your provider to order one, and measure your blood sugar at home. A home blood-pressure monitor is inexpensive and can be purchased online. Learn how to take your readings so you can discuss them with your provider. Other self-monitoring devices are also available, including watches that can take your pulse or do EKGs.

Heart attack or stroke

Finally, if you think you might be having a heart attack or stroke, don't put off calling your provider or going to the emergency room. The risk of dying from one of these conditions is greater than the risk of getting COVID-19 in the hospital.

These are difficult times, but please take care of yourself. ■

Sources:

Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracker Poll, May 2020.
Colivicchi, et al., Impact of the Coronavirus Disease-2019 Pandemic and Italian Lockdown Measures on Clinical Presentation and Management of Acute Heart Failure, *Journal of Cardiac Failure*, May 14, 2020.



Move to Improve Your Mood

New research from Columbia University Medical Center adds to our understanding of the health benefits of physical activity. Regular aerobic activity — the moderate kind, like riding a bike, brisk walking, or jogging — lowers levels of depression, hostility, and other negative feelings. What's more, the positive effects felt by subjects in the study lingered even after they stopped the exercise routine for a month.

This means that a helpful coping tool is available to most of us, and we have another good reason to move whenever we can.

Participants in the study exercised four times a week for 35 minutes, just short of the 150 minutes recommended by the federal government's *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition*.

You don't need to run or race. Just move, even if it means dancing in the living room. If you can combine that with strength-training activity (lifting weights or using resistance bands) two or more days a week, all the better. ■

Source: McIntyre, K. M., et al., The Effects of Aerobic Training on Subclinical Negative Affect: A Randomized Controlled Trial, *Health Psychology*, June 2020.

BY THE NUMBERS

One poll showed that nearly 50 percent of Americans say that someone in their family has skipped or delayed getting health care due to fear of COVID-19.

A study of hospital admissions in Italy showed that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a nearly 50 percent decrease in emergency department visits for patients with acute heart failure and that those patients had a higher in-hospital death rate.

Currently 70 percent of behavioral health visits for US Family Health Plan are televisits.



Another Good Reason to Get Up

Are you sitting down? Please stand up! A new study suggests that extremely sedentary people can be as much as 80 percent more likely to die from cancer than those who sit the least. Earlier studies have linked prolonged sitting with higher risks for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity, and premature death.

The study's researchers had some good news. Their statistical modeling shows that for every 30 minutes that

sitters exercise instead of continuing to sit, the risk of dying from cancer later on would be reduced by 31 percent. By "exercise," they don't necessarily mean a traditional workout, but switching sitting time for activities like housework, yard work, or a brisk walk. ■

Source: Gilchrist, S., et al., Association of Sedentary Behavior with Cancer Mortality in Middle-Aged and Older U.S. Adults, *Jama Oncology*, June 18, 2020.

Replacing sitting time with just 30 minutes of activity is linked with a lowered risk of cancer death.



Take a deep breath

The 4-7-8 way

In stressful times, it's helpful to learn ways to calm yourself. The "4-7-8 breath," advocated by Dr. Andrew Weil of the University of Arizona, is easy to master. It takes little time and can help you reduce anxiety. It can also help you get back to sleep if you wake up in the night. Here are the steps:

Sit in a chair with your back straight. Hold the tip of your tongue against the skin just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there for the exercise.

- **Close your mouth and inhale through your nose** to a mental count of **four**.
- **Hold your breath** while you count to **seven**.
- **Exhale through your mouth** while you count to **eight**.

This is one breath. Repeat the steps three more times for a total of four breaths. You can master this technique by practicing it twice a day, every day, so that it comes naturally to you in times of stress. ■

COVID-19 RESOURCES

Information about COVID-19 changes as scientists and the medical community learn more about the virus. Make sure that you're regularly checking in on credible, updated resources, including the following:

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
cdc.gov

TRICARE
tricare.mil

American Academy of Pediatrics
healthychildren.org

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-public-health

State of Rhode Island Department of Health
Health.ri.gov/diseases/ncov2019



Reducing Alzheimer's Risk



Just Five Steps

Research recently published in *Neurology* found an association between certain healthy behaviors and a lowered risk of Alzheimer's disease. The behaviors are:

- **Consistent moderate to intense physical activity** (at least 150 minutes a week).
- **Not smoking.** Quitting improves health even in people 60 and older who have been long-time smokers.
- **Limiting alcohol consumption** to one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men, or less.
- **Eating a high-quality, Mediterranean-type or DASH-type diet** that includes green leafy vegetables, berries, nuts, poultry, fish, and limited red meat and fried food.
- **Keeping the mind active in late life** with cognitively challenging activities, like reading books and newspapers, and playing games like cards, chess, and checkers.

Compared with participants who engaged in none of the healthy lifestyle factors, participants who engaged in two or three had a 37 percent reduced risk for Alzheimer's disease. Those who engaged in four or five had a 60 percent reduced risk. ■

Source: Dhana, et al., Healthy Lifestyle and the Risk of Alzheimer Dementia, *Neurology*, June 2020.

Heat or Ice?

If you're looking for pain relief, sometimes the most effective solution is the simplest: heat or ice. But it can be hard to know what pain responds to which remedy. This chart can help:

FOR THIS	TRY THIS
Arthritis	Moist heat relaxes tight muscles and soothes chronically stiff joints.
Headache	Ice numbs throbbing pain. Moist heat relaxes painful neck spasms.
Strains and sprains	Ice soothes inflammation. Heat eases stiffness after inflammation is over.
Tendinitis	Ice soothes inflammation and numbs pain.
Gout	Ice soothes flare-ups and numbs pain.

Caution: Don't use ice for severe injuries. In such cases, it can cause inflammation and delay healing. Seek advice from your primary care provider. ■

Sources: arthritisday.org, headaches.org/education



September Is Suicide Prevention Month

If you or someone you care about are having thoughts of suicide, it's important to get help right away. Keep these resources handy:

Community emergency services

Call
911

Veterans Crisis Line

Call
1.800.273.8255 and press 1

Chat online at
VeteransCrisisLine.net

Text
838255

Connects veterans and loved ones with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs responders.

Samaritans

Call or text
(877) 870 HOPE (4673)

Other resources
Samaritanshope.org

24/7 crisis services, grief-support services, and community outreach.

FLU SHOTS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you have your flu shot by the end of October. You can make an appointment with your Primary Care Provider or go to a pharmacy clinic. Either way, US Family Health Plan pays the cost.





We're in It Together...

Overcoming Caution Fatigue

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, many of us are at risk of “caution fatigue,” according to psychologist Jacqueline Gollan of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. She coined the term to describe the erosion of vigilance that can overcome even the most conscientious people.

“Whether it’s wearing masks or standing six feet away from people, caution fatigue is low motivation or energy to comply with safety guidelines,” Feinberg says. “Initially you may have been energized and positively focused on following pandemic-safety behavior. But as the virus has continued, you may start to focus on the negative and feel physically or mentally depleted.”

This depletion can make it hard to stay vigilant. Sadness and stress can make it difficult to make good decisions, concentrate, and have the energy to disinfect surfaces, wash your hands, remember to wear your mask, or perform social distancing.

How to combat caution fatigue

To help stay healthy and alert so that you can make sound decisions and remember to continue to follow COVID-19 precautions, it’s important to:

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Make sure that you and your family members have a consistent bedtime. Avoid screen time or stressful conversations in the hour before bedtime. Keep your room dark.
- **Do things that give you physical energy.** If you’re spending a lot of time at your desk, set a timer to make sure that you get up and make a circuit around the room, house, or up the street (if social distancing allows) at least once an hour. Get out for a safe walk every day if you can.
- **Do things that give you emotional and spiritual energy.** For some people this may mean reading quietly for an hour in the evening. For others, it may mean daily prayer or meditation. Doing something kind for someone else every day can also renew your spirit.
- **Remember the good things in your life.** Try not to let the stressors in your life eclipse the good things. Remember the people who nurtured you as a child — a favorite teacher, an aunt, a parent. Notice beauty in nature — the blooming of a favorite plant, the sounds of birds, the magnificence of a thunderstorm.

- **Limit watching or reading the news.** It’s important to stay informed, but it’s easy to take in too much. Consider limiting yourself to two news check-ins a day, or even just one, at specific times.
- **Watch your alcohol intake.** It can be tempting to drink extra alcohol during times of uncertainty, but alcohol impedes judgment, can affect your health adversely, and interferes with sleep.
- **Eat well.** Get plenty of fruits and vegetables, poultry, fish, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. Make water your beverage of choice.
- **Get professional help if you need it.** It’s normal to feel tired, anxious, or stressed during times like these. But if anxiety is making it difficult for you to perform your daily tasks, or if you feel overwhelmed by sadness or fear, it’s important to get professional help.

Remember that US Family Health Plan members can self-refer to an in-network mental health provider for the first eight visits in a Plan Year (January 1 through December 31), and that virtual visits are available. Call **1.800.208.9565** to obtain a current list of authorized network providers.

Continue to take COVID-19 precautions

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at **CDC.gov** provides clear, current information about COVID-19 and ways to reduce your risk. Here is a summary of those precautions.

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** If soap and water aren’t available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- **Don’t touch your face.** The virus is most easily transmitted through the nose, mouth, and eyes.
- **Avoid close contact.** Outside of your home, put at least six feet of distance between yourself and others who aren’t members of your household.
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a mask or other cloth face covering when you’re around other people.** The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.** Cough or sneeze into a tissue, throw the tissue away, and immediately wash your hands.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily.**
- **Monitor your health daily.** Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms develop, take your temperature and call your doctor for instructions. ■

Biscotti with Bite

Biscotti, those crisp, lozenge-shaped treats perfectly designed for dipping into coffee, cost a pretty penny in a coffee shop. Fortunately, you can make your own with ingredients you probably have on hand.

This version, spiked with cornmeal, lemon, and a little cayenne pepper, is a tangy riff on traditional (also delicious!) biscotti made with flour, nuts, and baking spices.

Biscotti are baked twice, once in a loaf shape, and again after they've been sliced from the loaf. The extra baking gives them their distinctive crust-like texture and means that they stay fresh for up to a couple of weeks in an airtight jar or tin.



Cornmeal, Lemon, and Cayenne Biscotti

About two dozen

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- grated zest from one lemon
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¾ cup cornmeal
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup sugar
- pinch of salt
- 2 room-temperature eggs

Heat oven to 350°. Melt the butter in a small saucepan or microwave, set aside to cool, and stir in the lemon zest and cayenne. Line two baking pans with parchment.

Mix the cornmeal, flour, baking soda, sugar, and salt together in a big bowl. Add the eggs and stir well. Add the melted-butter mixture and stir until everything is combined.

Divide the dough in half, and shape each half into a loaf roughly an inch-and-a-half wide. (Each gets its own pan because the dough spreads when cooked.)

Bake until golden brown (about 20 minutes), then cool the loaves on a baking rack. Reduce the oven temperature to 225°.

With a serrated knife, cut the cooled loaves on the diagonal into quarter-inch slices. Place the biscotti flat side down on a baking sheet, bake for 25 minutes, then turn the slices over. Bake for another 25 minutes or until crisp. They will become even crisper as they cool. ■

at ease

**Be hopeful. Be optimistic.
Never lose that sense of hope.**

— John Lewis





77 Warren Street
Boston, MA 02135

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 450
NEW BEDFORD, MA



Thinking About U

We all need rituals and celebrations to keep us anchored and connected. But in recent months so many rituals and celebrations have had to be cancelled or postponed. Saturday coffee with an old friend, the long Sunday walk through Boston to the North End that my husband and I have enjoyed for years, the annual spring train trip to see our sons in Baltimore and DC — seem as though they happened in another universe.

Like everyone, we've adapted and made do, willing to relinquish human contact to help ensure the health and safety of our family and community. My friend and I now share coffee on FaceTime calls, Hal and I take our walks around the edge of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, we play word games on Friday nights with our sons on Zoom.

We've invented another ritual, too. In March, I started making a batch of biscotti every Sunday evening to dip in morning coffee. It's calming to make the loaf, pat it into shape, do the double baking, and know that the cookie jar will be full again and that some things, like enjoying my husband's company while we read the paper with coffee and biscotti on the table, can stay the same, at least for now.

How about you? Have you developed any new rituals that are helping you stay steady? Please let me know at Kerry.Tucker@usfamilyhealth.org.

Kerry Tucker
Managing Editor/Senior Writer
Five Line Creative
Design

Cover photo by Kelly Lorenz
At Ease photo by Hal Morgan

