Many researched benefits of family meals exist. Studies have shown that family dinners can lead to improved resilience, a lower likelihood of developing eating disorders, academic benefits, increased self-esteem, lower risks of depression and substance abuse, and several other physical and mental health benefits.

Try these ideas for maximizing the mental health benefits of family meals with your family or with friends who are like family to you:

• Pay close attention to each other while electronic distractions are turned off, or use technology for a video call to gather with someone from a distance for the meal.
• Share stories of the day’s experiences to celebrate the highs and support each other through the lows.
• Be fully present in the moment and encourage everyone to listen to details and to ask follow-up questions even when a subject may not be the most interesting to you.
• Show appreciation for a positive attitude and persistence in the face of challenges.
• Validate feelings that are expressed and empathize with each other.
• When mistakes are discussed, focus on how they are part of the learning process.
• Try to avoid criticism and arguments by looking for the good in others and giving others the benefit of the doubt for having positive intentions.
• Be open to silliness and laughter.
• Intentionally include gratitude and hope in your conversation.

To receive email updates on current Emotional Wellness Programs, including virtual presentations, send an email saying “Feel Good” to emotional-wellness-no-reply@tricityfamilyservices.org