

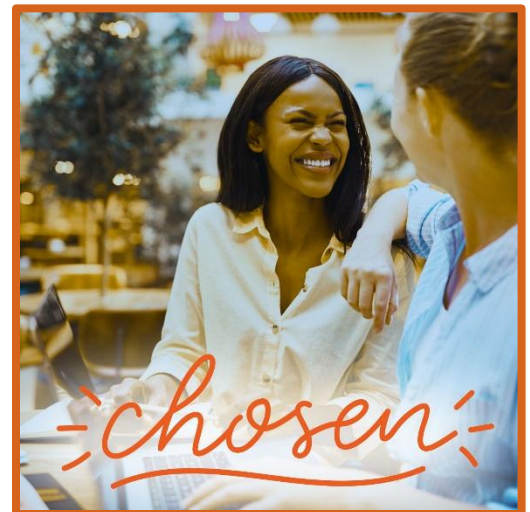
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Employee Monthly Communication

Chosen Families: Finding Connection Beyond Blood

While many are fortunate to be born into loving, supportive families, that is not the reality for everyone. Some of us come from environments that were abusive, neglectful, or emotionally distant spaces where safety, trust, and unconditional love were not present. For others, family may live far away or hold beliefs and values that no longer align with who we are. Sometimes, tensions arise in our relationships with children or relatives, creating distance and disconnection, such as when we are prevented from participating in the lives of our grandchildren. And for those grieving the loss of a loved one, the void left behind often stirs a longing for a desire to give and receive love again.



Let's be honest, while our family of origin can offer stability, inspiration, and love, it can also be a source of pain, rejection, and deep disappointment. If your family story does not match the idealized versions seen on TV or social media, please know that you are not alone. Family, today, is more diverse and inclusive than ever before. It is no longer confined to biology, legal ties, or shared addresses, it is defined by love, connection, and mutual care.

In fact, the very concept of family has evolved significantly. As of 2020, only 18.4% of U.S. households followed the traditional nuclear family structure. A 2023 study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that "41% of participants considered close friends or chosen family to be part of their family. ("The rise of chosen families – and why they matter more than ever: APS ...") Millennials were reported to value emotional bonds and unconditional love over legal ties, obligations, or genetics."

You may have grown up hearing, "Blood is thicker than water," but is that always true? If or when that no longer holds true for you consider embracing the idea that "Friends are the family, you choose." A chosen family allows you to form bonds with people who see and value you for who you truly are. These are individuals who share your values, support your growth, and offer the kind of unconditional love that might have been missing elsewhere.

Who Can Be Part of a Chosen Family?

Chosen family can include:

- Romantic partners
- Close friends
- Colleagues
- Support group members
- Religious or spiritual community members
- Former partners or in-laws
- Foster families
- Adopted children or adoptive parents
- Mentors and mentees

Anyone who offers mutual love, emotional support, and a sense of belonging can become part of your chosen family.

The Beauty of Chosen Families

Chosen families can be incredibly healing and affirming. They offer a safe space where you are celebrated rather than judged, where your presence is not just tolerated, but cherished. Whether you feel most connected to your biological or chosen family, what truly matters is the quality of those relationships and their impact on your mental and emotional well-being.

It is worth noting that, just like any relationship, chosen families are not perfect. Disagreements may arise, boundaries may be tested, and growing pains may occur. But the key difference lies in intentionality. These relationships are forged by choice, mutual respect, and shared values. We have the power to set healthy boundaries and to redefine what family means to us.

Benefits of Having a Chosen Family

1. **Emotional Support:** Chosen family members provide encouragement during life's challenges, offering a safe space to express feelings without fear of judgment.
2. **Unconditional Love and Acceptance:** They accept you for who you are, regardless of your past, lifestyle, identity, or beliefs.
3. **Sense of Belonging:** Being part of a chosen family fosters a deep feeling of connection and community, reducing loneliness and isolation.
4. **Empowerment and Confidence:** Supportive relationships help you feel seen, valued, and capable—boosting self-esteem and mental health.

5. **Shared Values and Mutual Respect:** Unlike biological ties, chosen family relationships are often based on shared ethics, experiences, or goals, leading to deeper understanding.
6. **Stability and Consistency:** These relationships are intentionally maintained and nurtured, which can create dependable emotional safety over time.
7. **Opportunity for Growth and Healing:** Chosen families can help you break unhealthy generational patterns and offer models of healthy, respectful communication.
8. **Freedom to Redefine Family Roles:** You can choose how you want to show up in relationships, and how others show up for you, free from inherited expectations or roles.
9. **Cultural and Identity Affirmation:** For LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, or marginalized individuals, chosen families often provide identity-affirming spaces that may not exist in the family of origin.
10. **Reciprocal Relationships:** These are connections where giving and receiving love, support, time, and care are balanced and mutual.

Whether by circumstance or choice, building a chosen family is a powerful act of self-love and resilience. It is a way to create the love, care, and connection we all deserve. If your family does not look like the traditional mold, that is not a loss, it is an opportunity to build something uniquely beautiful, on your own terms.

If you need help in exploring ways to enhance your biological or chosen family, consider calling Ulliance at **1-800-448-8326** for individual, couples or family counseling or our other services. We can help!

**For more information, tools, resources, or app information, call your
Life Advisor Employee Assistance Program!**



**Ulliance provides no cost, confidential, short-term counseling
for you & your family.**

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