

Change Your Way To Health!



How to hold a family meeting

It is not always possible, given today's hectic lifestyles, for family members to sit down together and discuss day-to-day events and activities. Yet holding regular meetings can provide families with a valuable opportunity to build and strengthen their family bond and help each member grow as an individual. Additionally, family meetings teach children valuable social and life skills, and provide parents with insight into the inner workings of the family and its dynamics.

In this month's newsletter we discuss why family meetings make good sense, and offer tips for ensuring your meetings are both productive and nurturing.

Family meetings provide a great opportunity to:

Coordinate the running of the household. Family members share their plans for the week, discuss family chores, rules, responsibilities, etc.

Get input from everyone on bigger decisions such as where to go on vacation, or discuss serious family issues that may require problem-solving or new solutions.

Create a space for family members to share their feelings about emotional issues such as a death or divorce.

Set goals for the family as a whole and for each family member, including how the goals will be accomplished and how you will know when they've been accomplished. As part of the goal-setting process, the family might choose to develop a Family Mission Statement and/or Family Values Statement.

Review family finances and budget. This could include a discussion on ways to save or earn more money.

Give children an opportunity to have their voice heard and take on more responsibility. For parents this may mean letting go of a need to micromanage, and instead demonstrating trust and appreciation.

Avoid potential power struggles among the children by having a forum for them to talk with their siblings about sharing control and the need for self-discipline.

Create positive memories. The establishment of regular family meetings will be a family tradition everyone will value for years to come.



Family meetings work best when there is a regular schedule and they are not just called when there's a family crisis.

The format you choose for your family meetings will depend on what works best for you and your family's lifestyle. Meetings can be structured and have very specific rules, or be more flexible and relaxed.

If you find that the meetings are not as productive as you would like, try a different approach. The critical thing is that all family members come together to share, discuss, problem-solve, and communicate.

Tips

Schedule meetings well in advance to ensure all family members are available to participate. Once the date and time are set, have the expectation that no one is to arrange other activities at this time.

When first starting out, determine what the decision-making process will be. Parents may decide decisions will be made by consensus rather than by majority vote and that they have the right to overrule the opinions of the children if necessary.

If the family likes to work from an agenda, give everyone the opportunity to add to it in advance by keeping it posted on the refrigerator or some other accessible place. If the children are old enough, let them take turns planning and facilitating the meeting.

Encourage a positive atmosphere where there is no yelling or insults, only one person at a time can speak, and where all ideas are respected.

Parents should offer praise, encouragement, and support... and not give lectures. They should also be listening for and acknowledge feelings that are expressed.

Family members should be encouraged to ask open-ended questions to clarify the problem and brainstorm solutions that include everyone's ideas and input.

Don't expect decisions to be made immediately – some family members may require time to think things through.

Keep the meeting short – 30 minutes is optimal. Consider ending with a fun activity or special treat.

We want your questions, comments, and suggestions.

E-mail us at:

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