Family Meetings Can Teach Responsibility, Communication

Regular family meetings provide opportunities for families to connect and for children to learn important life skills. Led properly, these meetings can teach your child about responsibility, communication, negotiation and cooperation.

To get the most out of your family meetings:

**Meet regularly**—once every week or two. In addition, allow family members to request a meeting if they have something important to discuss.

**Make an agenda.** Before each meeting, ask family members what they would like to discuss. Schedule enough time to discuss each topic, but try to keep the meeting under one hour.

**Put someone in charge.** The chairperson must stick to the agenda and give everyone a fair, uninterrupted say. Initially, the chairperson should be an adult. After a few meetings, consider letting your child give it a try!

**Take turns.** After one person describes an idea or problem, everyone else can explain how they feel about it. Brainstorm solutions, giving each person time to contribute. Choose an idea—or a combination of ideas—to try, with parents having the final say.

**Write down decisions.** As each decision is made, record the family’s plan. Keep notes in a journal or post them as a reminder. You may need to revisit certain decisions or solutions at future meetings to discuss whether or not they are working.

Remember the Three Keys to Discipline

Some parents think that discipline means punishment. But the most effective discipline helps your children learn what they did wrong—and how they can make a better choice in the future.

Here are three keys to productive discipline:

**Remain clam.** When you lose your temper, you also lose the upper hand. Giving in to an urge to yell at your children teaches them that it’s okay to lose control when they are upset.

**Be consistent.** It doesn’t take long for your children to learn whether you really intend to enforce rules. Say yes just once to watching TV before school and you’ll have a battle every morning. Don’t set rules unless you will consistently enforce them.

**Avoid criticizing.** Just describe the behavior. “It was your sister’s turn to go on the computer and you wouldn’t quit playing your game.” Then remind your child of the rule and of the consequence.

“See everything, overlook a great deal; correct when needed.”

— Pope John XXIII
Put an End to Procrastination by Doing the Crummy Job First!

Your children have math homework, book reports and spelling homework. They hate spelling. So that’s why you’re going to tell them to do the spelling first. Here are the reasons:

**Crummy jobs are a part of life.** We all have to do some things we don’t like. Talk to your children about some of the jobs you don’t enjoy doing, but have to do anyway. Taking out the trash every week isn’t a fun task, but what’s the alternative?

**Putting off a difficult task** just makes it—well, more difficult. Until you get that job finished, it’s going to occupy your mind and hang over your head.

**All it takes is a little push.** Set a timer for 15 minutes and say, “Work on your spelling for 15 minutes. Then you can stop. Once your children get started, it may not be as painful as they thought.

**Finishing that dreaded task** is going to feel wonderful. Help your children learn to focus on how great they will feel when the job is finished—not how they feel while they are doing it. But let them know that it’s also okay to build in a small reward for finishing an unpleasant task, such as spending 10 minutes playing outside.

Are You Teaching Your Child to Make Good Choices?

Parents want children to make wise choices. When the time comes, you hope your children will say no to peer pressure and yes to positive things. Are you doing all you can now to teach them to make these wise choices? Answer yes or no to the questions below to find out:

**1. Do you give your children** opportunities to make choices every day? Sometimes they are small, but they have to live with the choices they make.

**2. Do you talk** about family decisions together?

Q & A

**Q:** My children hate to read. What can I do to help them to enjoy reading more?

**A:** Children who see their parents reading usually grow up to be readers themselves. Show your children that reading is important to you by doing these things:

- **Let your children see you reading** every day. Pick up a newspaper, magazine or a book. Your children will see that reading is important to you, and will want to read, too.

- **Tell your children why** you’re reading—for information to check out something you think you know. Or you may be reading just for fun.

- **Look up a word** in the dictionary if you come across one you are unsure of. Ask your children if they know the meaning of the word.

- **Read aloud to your children.** When you come across something you think your children might find interesting, read a small part of it to them. They may be motivated to finish reading it.

- **Get your own library card** and use it. When you take your children to the library, find something to check out for yourself.

- **Join your children.** When you see your children reading, pick up something to read yourself and bring a snack to share.

- **Give books as gifts.** Show your children that books are valuable to you by giving them as gifts. Encourage your children to give their friends books as gifts, too.

Do you brainstorm about possible solutions and come up with the best one together?

**3. Do you sometimes think** out loud, talking about how you are making a choice?

**4. Do you encourage your children** to ask questions?

**5. Do you teach your children** that every decision has consequences?

**How well are you doing?**

Each yes means you’re helping your children make better choices today and in the future. For no answers, try those ideas in the quiz.