

# Parenting for Success Class #5

Family Meetings & Developing Rules



# Introduction

## Why Have Family Meetings?

Today's families are busy. It's hard to find time to spend together as a family. After all, there's only so much time in the day for work, school, sports, lessons, friends, and other activities. As a result, family time is often sacrificed to make room for these other obligations.

Holding family meetings can be a great way to re-focus your family members on issues and relationships that affect the entire family's well-being. They are also a great time to share information and make decisions as a group. This will help keep your children invested in the success of the family as a whole.



# Sharing Information

For families to succeed, it's important for every member to know that they are important to the group. Sharing information is a key way for family members to coordinate their lives and remain invested in the family.



# Sharing Information

## Family meetings are an excellent place to:

- **Coordinate schedules**—families can plan for group and individual activities, transportation needs, expenses and materials needed, etc.
- **Offer praise**—parents can show their approval and offer specific praise to their children for such things as improving in school, helping around the house, getting along with other children, etc. Family meetings can be a wonderful place for children to receive praise because it is “public.” The other family members will hear the positive comments, thereby further reinforcing behavior.
- **Share really important news**—family members will know that they will have a forum at which they will be able to talk about issues that are affecting their lives. For example, they may choose to discuss problems the children are having at school, activities they would like to do as a family, what’s happening in their friends’ lives, etc.



# Making Decisions

Children will be much happier if they are invited to give their input when decisions are made. This helps them feel important, and they will be more invested in outcomes if they can participate in making the decision in the first place.

While it's important to invite your kids to participate, don't be afraid of setting appropriate limits. Limits allow your children safe parameters when making decisions. For example, you may invite your children to decide which movie to see on the weekend, but by warning them that they may not see a rated 'R' movie, you know that their decision will be appropriate. Remember, parents have the power to "veto" some decisions.

## **Family meetings are an excellent place to make decisions such as:**

- Dinner menus
- Family activities
- TV viewing
- Household rules and consequences
- Chores



# Effective Meetings

**Here are some tips for having effective family meetings:**

- **Keep meetings short**—topics should be simple enough to be solved easily. As your kids increase their skills, you can move ahead accordingly, but in the beginning, your goal should be to keep the meetings brief. You don't want your kids to lose interest.
- **Schedule a reasonable time**—make sure you choose to hold meetings when it is most convenient for the family. Be flexible.
- **Make meetings fun**—although there will be times when you will need to discuss serious issues and make serious decisions, family meetings should be enjoyable. Concentrate on sharing information and praising good things that other family members are doing.



# Effective Meetings

- **Teach in advance**—try to teach your kids how to bring up topics before the meeting takes place. Have them practice what to say without offending or blaming someone else.
- **Write it down**—use some form of record keeping. Write decisions in a notebook or find a convenient, well-visited spot to display them.
- **Give everyone a chance to speak**—you can teach cooperation, respect, and sensitivity by assuring that everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, gets an equal voice in the way your family operates.
- **Give positive consequences**—give rewards and praise for listening to others, for not interrupting, for bringing up good suggestions, or for offering to help out.



# Developing Family Rules

All families have rules. Most of the time, rules are unwritten expectations for parents and children. For example, “if you mess something up, you clean it up.” But problems can arise if the rules aren’t clear. That leads to family members living by different sets of rules.

## **So try to...**

- Make family rules clear. If rules aren’t clear, your children may be living by one set of rules while you live by another.
- Make sure that everyone is aware of “unwritten expectations.” If your expectations are clearly communicated, how can your children be expected to follow them?



# Developing Family Rules

## Try to keep the following in mind too...

- Make rules that everyone can follow, even the youngest children. Also, make sure your expectations are reasonable for your children's ages and abilities.
- Include all of the family members when deciding on rules. Gather input from everyone.
- Limit your list of rules to no more than 8 or 10. Don't overwhelm your family with more rules than they can remember and reasonably follow.
- Include positive and negative consequences. By including consequences in the rule, it's clear to everyone what will happen if they don't follow the rules.
- Review when necessary. When you find that everyone naturally follows a rule or that a rule doesn't work well, it's time to review the need for that rule. Consider bringing this issue up at another family meeting.



# Conclusion

Family meetings are a great way to help your children become, or remain, invested in your family's success. By encouraging them to participate in meetings and to help develop family rules, you are treating them as mature individuals and teaching them to think for themselves.

This is also a great way to get them to “buy in” to the rules, and you'll likely find them more willing to accept the consequences if they don't follow the rules they helped set.



# Next Class

In class #6, we'll look at how you can use charts and contracts, in conjunction with family meetings, to help your children set goals.



# Thank you!

We hope this class was useful to you.

For more free parenting resources, including additional classes in this series, please visit:

[www.youthvillage.org](http://www.youthvillage.org)

