

Limits and Family Meetings

Patricia Morgan © 2003

Replace hoping and nagging
Have a Strategy. Make a Plan.

Family meetings provide a cooperative framework for sharing feelings and ideas, for supporting wishes and goals, for problem solving, for making future family plans and for increasing the pleasure, harmony and fun in the family home.

Suggested Guidelines:

1. Meet on a regular basis, at a specific time, for a specific length of time. After Sunday dinner works for many families.
2. Utilize active listening and "I" messages tools to encourage clear communication.
3. Use the meetings to solve problems and increase the joy in your family.
4. Use the meetings to plan family events, outings, games and fun.
5. Decide whether you want to keep minutes of your meetings. An adult may chair the meeting while a child may keep minutes. Trade around responsibilities as the children learn note taking and chairing skills.
6. Make clear commitments to one another. State either "I will" or "I won't."
7. Expect minimal involvement from family members five years and under.

Suggested Format:

1. **Share appreciations** from the previous week.

Example: *Thank you Dad for fixing my bicycle. Thank you Johnny for keeping your agreement to stay out of your sister's room.*

2. **Evaluation of solutions** used in the previous week.

Example: *We have kept articles off the stair steps all week and I think we have kept our family safer. I would like to recommend that we keep up this new habit.*

3. **Problems identified** (complaints) of the week. Keep to no more than one per family member behaviour(s) for the following week with "I will" or "We will."

Example: *I **could** tidy up after meals.*

*I **could** get a meal once a week.*

*We, kids, **could** make our own lunches.*

*We **could** all clean the house together on Saturdays.*

*Do we all agree that we **will** clean the house together Saturdays mornings?*

5. **Define wants and requests** of one another. Make future plans for the next week or longer.

Example: *Will you, Dad or Mom, make a chocolate cake for dessert on Saturday?*

6. End with a family game, activity or snacking treat.

Enjoy your family!!!

