

Family Meetings: Recipe for Success

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As I stated last week, the purpose of a weekly family gathering time is to have one evening each week where the family is the focus and priority. As simple as that sounds, it will not happen unless we reserve the time. Put it on your schedule just like you do with all other appointments. It can include a special meal as well: Taco Tuesday or Crockpot Chili Friday.

Family meetings can make a big difference. They can become the keystone to a happy, harmonious family life. Families who meet weekly find that siblings fight less, children argue less with their parents and there is less yelling and nagging! That is definitely an hour a week well spent. If you missed the WHY, [read last week's blog first](#) (The Power of Weekly Family Time).

The purpose is two-fold: logistics and connections. Logistics are the nuts and bolts of running a family: what's coming up next week, what is needed for school (special projects, requests for cookies, sports practice, music lessons, etc.) Connection is what life is all about. It is the love, the hugs, the emotional support, the delight and pride in each other. The connection with people who love us—that is what makes life worth living.

Joyful Parenting Coach Elisabeth Stitt suggests that there are four essential elements that make a great family meeting. First is a short sharing time. Each family member shares 1-2 sentences on a given topic: the best thing about my day/week, what I am grateful for, my most embarrassing moment, my favorite family vacation (5 minutes.) Second is a calendar check in about family logistics -- what is coming up and who needs to do what (10 minutes.)

Third is a time of reading or discussion on a pertinent topic. It could be a short spiritual reading, a few pages from an inspiring biography/autobiography, The Book of Virtues or a favorite chapter book followed by a discussion. This is an opportunity to talk about/share stories of family history and values (15 minutes) Lastly, it is essential to do something fun. This could be anything from a quick board game to a pillow fight to hide-and-seek to charades. If you are just getting started with Family Meetings, use the first time to brainstorm ideas for future meetings (15-30 minutes.)

Using these four elements, you can be flexible and creative with family meetings. If your children are young, it may be about establishing a weekly routine without worry about the various parts. With older children, include them in the planning process for the weekly fun activities and reading/discussion topic. Creating new family traditions could be exciting. For ideas, [check this blog entry second](#).

Occasionally, the discussion time could be dedicated to resolving challenges between family members. Come up with your family's own unique name for the weekly gathering if you like. Planning a family trip or summer vacation would be an excellent opportunity to discuss in order to get everyone's input.

Things that we schedule are more likely to happen and having a regular time both for logistics and for connection as a family will make parenting less stressful and more joyful. What will your next family meeting look like?