



The Power Of Family Meetings

One of the themes stressed in Active Parenting is the importance of allowing children a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Just as freedom of speech is a basic freedom in our democratic society, a cooperative household must allow its members the same freedom. By allowing children to influence our decisions through respectful discussion, we are actually better able to maintain our parental authority. Knowing that their voices and opinions make a difference builds cooperation and responsibility and makes anger and rebellion less likely. This is as true in the family as it is in society at large, and it is part of preparing our children to live and participate in the larger world.

There are different types of family meetings:

- **Informal Meetings:** These are informal, quick meetings to make a decision about something affecting the family in the near future. This type of family meeting can be used to decide on a family enrichment activity or having a simple family meeting to set a bedtime routine.
- **Problem-Prevention Talks:** This type of meeting is effective as a method of anticipating and preventing problems before they happen. For example, you can discuss guidelines for grocery shopping before you go to the store to avoid whining about what cereal to buy.
- **Character Talks:** These are discussions aimed at building positive character traits and values in your children. Some topics for these meetings can be honesty, kindness, respect, compassion or how to be a friend.
- **Problem Solving Meetings:** This type of family meeting is used to solve problems owned by parents, children or shared. They can be held regularly or as needed when a problem arises. For example, assuring that everyone does their share of chores and keeping the home looking as it should.
- **Family Council Meetings:** This is a more formal type of meeting that operates much like a business meeting. They offer an ideal forum for all family members to participate in resolving problems and making family decisions. This is a time, once a week, when the entire family gathers to make plans and handle problems that affect family members. It can last from 20 minutes to an hour and is conducted according to an agenda. In effect, it is what a business meeting is to an organization.

Take time to schedule regular family meetings and you will experience more family cooperation and understanding. When guidelines and expectations are established, it's easier for parents to provide effective discipline and children will rebel less when they know what behavior is acceptable. Be careful, however, not to turn the meeting into a confrontation. Your goal is to establish family meetings as enjoyable times that allow children to have their voices heard and their wishes considered. Stay upbeat and encouraging as much as possible and you will find that family meetings are a great benefit to parents and children alike.

To learn more about how to encourage your children to be courageous and confident, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help is available for parents of children of all ages, from toddler to teen. To access the Online Video Library, go to the **ACFC website**, click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.

FREE ONLINE COURSES THAT IMPROVE YOUR FAMILY LIFE

In these video-based, interactive classes—available 24/7—you'll learn a consistent, encouraging style of parenting that will benefit you and your children for a lifetime. As a self-study course, you have the option of when to participate, based on your own schedule and at your convenience. Gain additional insight from your online group leaders as they provide support and feedback.

Four available classes:

- **Active Parenting: First Five Years**—for parents of children from birth to age 5
- **Active Parenting 4th ED**—for parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce**—for divorced and divorcing parents
- **Active Parenting of Teens**—for parents of preteens and teens

Continue your experience as an “active” parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

Visit ACFCcares.com for more information and to start your Active Parenting journey today.