How to Have the Best Family Meeting on the Block

Is it difficult to get your family together? Are meal times chaotic? Are you stuck doing all the chores? Is your family operating individually and not as a team? Do members of your family have constant miscommunications? Is your teenager disengaged from the family? Isolating in his or her room? Always at a friend’s house? Never home and never available?

If so, do you want to increase communication, have everyone be on the same page and plan fun and enjoyable times together?

Then read on…
A family meeting is a great way to improve communication with your teenager and have an organized, enjoyable and meaningful family life.

What exactly is a family meeting?
A family meeting provides you the forum to pull your family together, communicate the week’s events/responsibilities and make family decisions about household chores or even planning a vacation!

How to set up your First Family Meeting

=> Pick a time and place (e.g., the living room on Sunday morning at 11am)
=> Tell your family that this meeting will be no longer than 30 minutes.
=> At the start of the first meeting ask someone in the family to volunteer to take notes and someone to watch the clock.
=> Let family members know that family members will be taking turns with note taking and running the meetings.
=> Let them know that this meeting is mandatory (important decisions will be made…if they don’t show, then they won’t have a say.)

Sample Agenda for Your First Family Meeting

1. Introducing the concept of the family meeting (this is why you want to have family meetings).
   a. Meetings will be held every Sunday at 11AM for no longer than 30 minutes.
   b. Everyone is expected to be there.
   c. If a member cannot be there (out of town) explain that the meeting notes will be kept in a notebook available for all family members to review.
2. Establishing rules and procedures for the meetings.
   a. One person talks at a time.
   b. All suggestions are welcome
   c. No Judgment/No one gets to be wrong.

3. Explain that a blank Agenda will be posted on the fridge where family members can fill in topics to be discussed at the next meeting.

4. Come up with something fun to do after the meeting and do it.

   **A Family Meeting Does Not Work If:**

   => they are held at the dinner table or in the car
   => kids complain or whine
   => or parents use the meetings to discipline

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=> Start the meeting with compliments.
=> Tell your teens all the great things that you noticed about them in the past week.
=> Even if you are at a loss, find something positive to say anyway!
=> Ask the teens to say positive things to the other family members and so forth.
=> During the meeting make sure that everyone gets to say how they feel.
=> Make sure you get to resolutions during your discussions.
=> Record and document your family meetings and keep them available to everyone.
=> At the beginning of the next meeting review the notes from the previous meetings.
=> And, always end with something fun which helps family members feel good, like a group hug, game or family ritual.