



# SIMPLE STEPS TO FAMILY PLANS THAT WORK

Plan, bond, and conquer together!



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## Why Create a Plan?

While some individuals may feel hesitant about planning, fearing it will restrict their flexibility and spontaneity, the absence of a plan can lead to increased stress and last-minute decision-making. On the other hand, some individuals thoroughly enjoy planning but may encounter frustrations when their efforts lack support from others, leading them to shoulder all responsibilities. However, striking a balance between these extremes is essential for a healthy and supportive family environment.

By engaging all family members in the planning process, you can foster a sense of inclusion and ensure that everyone's thoughts and feelings are considered. Developing a plan tailored specifically to your family's needs empowers you to create a framework that aligns with your values, goals, and aspirations.

Understanding how each family member thinks and feels will help you address their unique perspectives and desires, leading to greater cooperation, clear communication, and overall unity.

It provides a roadmap for navigating life's challenges and milestones together. It allows you to proactively anticipate and prepare for significant transitions, such as managing daily routines, welcoming a new member, resolving conflicts, and fostering personal growth.

By investing time and effort into planning, you can establish a strong foundation that promotes understanding, support, and the overall well-being of your family.



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The ideal is that family members are **engaged in the planning process and understand what** is going to happen.

This simple but helpful guide on how to carry out a family meeting will allow you to create a plan that works for your family and for you.

## Steps to Carry Out a Family Meeting

You don't have to wait until a special event or vacation is coming up, you can make family meetings a regular part of your family routine to familiarize everyone with the process. You can use a family meeting to check in with each other, provide positive feedback, communicate rules, or to celebrate someone's accomplishment on the week.

The family meeting is conducted following the model of **a business meeting**. These are done **every time** co-workers have to talk about something about their work, a project, changes, etc. This allows for coworkers to stay informed, focus on their part of the job, and work as a team.



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The practice of having family meetings will support planning big events, address changes in the family and consequently work as a team. You can use family meetings as a recurring tool every week, month, or quarter.

A key aspect of family meetings is creating a safe space to ask others for their opinion, make each other feel seen, heard, and valued. This way, each member of the family can feel connected and understood.

This also reduces conflicts during big events because everyone knows what is happening, is clear on expectations, and has an opportunity to be part of the planning.

When conducting a family meeting it is incredibly helpful to have an agenda or structure for the process and a set time that isn't overwhelming. You can start out with 5 min., 10 min, or 30 min, depending on the age of your children. It is always easier to get on board with short and simple meetings than with long complex ones that drag on. Having a clear structure helps with this.

**Here are examples of items to put in the agenda for conducting recurring weekly family meetings:**

1. Point out positives you noticed on family members.
2. Chores. Who is going to do what?
3. Any homework or projects children have to work on?
4. Fun. How is the family, individually or as a group going to do something fun?
5. Planning for the holidays/ vacation/ big event etc.

**Tips on agenda items:**

- Keep the agenda simple



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- No more than two small items or 1 big item per meeting.
- Address one item at a time.
- Be flexible and tweak or simplify agenda items to suit your family's needs.

## Creating and Carrying out a Family Plan for Special Events

When you are making a plan for the holidays, vacations, or an event, try these steps:

1. Decide **when** is the best time to have a family meeting and **announce** it.

**You can say:** *“Tonight after dinner I want you to please meet me in the living room at 7:30 p.m. to have a small family meeting to start planning our next vacation.”* or *“Saturday morning after breakfast, I want to meet in the living room to talk about our trip to visit grandma next ( week, month, etc.)”*

2. Open the meeting by expressing how grateful you are that they are there.

**You can say:** *“Thank you for making it to the living room on time.”* or *“I really appreciate that you were all punctual.”*

3. **Point out 1 positive** thing you noticed in each family member. It can be something you noticed during this last week or during the day.

**For example:** *“I noticed how Carlos ( age 5) has been putting his plate in the sink after dinner.”* or *“I noticed how Emma has been helping her little sister learn*



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to make her bed.” or “Jimmy, thank you for helping me put your toys away tonight.”

#### 4. **Engage the family:**

a) Talk about how they are feeling. Invite family to talk about how they are feeling: Here are some questions you can pick from:

“How are you feeling about our trip to visit grandma?” or

“What are you most excited about our trip to visit grandma?”

c) **Brainstorm** about different activities. You can write them down as each person is sharing. You can ask: “What activities would make our time with grandma special for YOU?” (ask each member to share and write them down).

d) **Choose the activities** that are possible and most meaningful for everyone. Validate any hurt feelings anyone would have if their activity is not picked. Let them know that you are grateful they got to share and that the activity will be considered for another time.

b) Identify the **Action Steps**. – Think about the steps you need to take or the things that need to be done to accomplish the activity. For example, choose dates, set a budget, find a place within budget, schedule the activities, etc.

**NOTE:** Remember to breathe and take time to relax. Communication is clear and more effective when we are calm!



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5. **Plan follow-up family meetings:** Once the family has identified the action steps needed to accomplish the plan, it's important to establish a check-in or other family meetings to follow up with the 1st action step and move to the next step.

Allow each member to volunteer for specific responsibilities they want to take on and if necessary encourage them to take on some that may be aligned with their age, strengths, and interests.

By doing check-ins the family can work together to overcome obstacles, stay on track, and successfully execute the plan.

It's very important to celebrate accomplishments along the way to keep motivation high and promote a positive atmosphere in the family.

## **Creating a Legacy of Connection and Growth**

Conducting family meetings and planning together as a family can set the foundation for a lasting legacy within your family. The long-term practice of this exercise can help your children learn to plan for activities, address challenges, find solutions, work as a team, communicate their wants and needs, feel heard and understood, feel secure, and build confidence.

Embracing these principles allows your family to grow stronger together as you navigate life's joys and obstacles.



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If you would like additional guidance, support, or professional assistance in fostering a healthy and cohesive family unit, don't hesitate to reach out to our family counseling center by requesting a consultation [Here](#) or calling 1800-356-9811 to book an appointment with one of our experts.