
How to Build a Stronger Family

“ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH.”

-HELEN KELLER

SESSION PARTICIPANTS: Foster-Adoptive Parents/Caregivers and Foster-Adoptive Child/Adolescent (Family unit)

SESSION TIME: 90 minutes

Objectives:

1. To demonstrate steps for holding a family meeting in order to enhance communication between family members
2. To provide tools to solve problems as a family unit
3. To provide family-fun activities to utilize in family meetings

Materials:

- Worksheet: [How to Hold a Family Meeting](#)
- Worksheet: [S.N.A.P. Problem-Solving Model](#)
- Worksheet: [Family Collage](#)
- Worksheet: [Family Statements](#)

Materials for the Participant’s Folder:

- Worksheet: How to Hold a Family Meeting
- Worksheet: S.N.A.P. Problem-Solving Model
- Worksheet: Family Collage
- Worksheet: Family Statements

Introduction (10 minutes)

- General welcome and facilitator introductions
- Introduction of today's topic on family meetings, problem solving, and family fun activities
- If conducting in a group format, ask each member of the group to introduce themselves with information such as:
 - Adoptive parent/caregiver name
 - Child/Adolescent name and age
 - Family hobbies (What is one activity you like to do for fun together?)
 - One personal goal the family has for today's session (Note: The facilitator should give a few minutes to think about the goal before asking them to share)
- If you're not conducting in a group format, ask family members to introduce themselves and each identify a family strength or something their family does for fun and a goal for the session.

Skills of the Day: Meeting as a family (30 minutes)

Say: Today we are meeting as a family and we are discussing how to hold a family meeting! We want to help you feel stronger as a family unit and one way to do that is by having a weekly family meeting.

Family meetings are important for a number of reasons. It makes your family feel like a priority when you set aside time for each other and it is a great opportunity for open communication among family members. It is also a great time to discuss events on the family calendar, plan family activities, problem solve about any conflicts in the home, or clarify expectations for your child.

- **Exercise 1: Worksheet: How to Hold a Family Meeting**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/Howtoholdafamilymeeting.pdf

- Ask: *Why else is a family meeting important?*
- Participants discuss topics such as how family communication can be enhanced, family rules can be set, and how it can help get everyone on the same page
- Say: *This worksheet outlines the steps to hold a family meeting. We are going to go over them together.*
- Say: *The first step is for parents/caregivers to decide when to begin holding these family meetings. We believe that the sooner they are scheduled, the better. We also want to work together as a family to get everyone's commitment to the process.*
- Ask: *Let's take a minute and get into our family units and talk about what everyone's thoughts are about having weekly family meetings. Parents/caregivers take a minute to think about when would be a good time to start these meetings and check in with everyone to see when a good time in the week would be. Remember these meetings are a time for the whole family to meet without anything else going on in order to talk about goals, plans, and strengthen what is already so great about the family.*
- Ask: *Would anyone want to share what their thoughts are about the family meeting with the group? Parents/caregivers, do you like it? Children/teens, what are your thoughts? How are going to make this happen weekly?*

- Say: *The next step is to create ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. What are some that we can think of together that could apply to all families? Please keep in mind that any rules discussed here do not have to be applied to your family, but let's use this time to brainstorm together.*
 - Examples: Listen to others, one person talks at a time, respect each other, kind words, no criticism, no fighting, no cell phones.
- Say: *Next, it is important to set an agenda for your meeting. First, choose a topic to discuss and go around the group and have everyone answer the topic. You can use a "sharing object" or "talking stick" to facilitate the discussion and whoever is holding the object is allowed to speak. Then, before you end your meeting you want to decide when you will meet again. Maybe it is a consistent weekly time, maybe it fluctuates week to week. Make sure it works for your family and all members! Finally, end the meeting by going around and have everyone say one thing they learned or gained from the meeting. Then close with a fun game or a family activity or making fun plans for the entire family!*
- Ask: *Let's take some time to set your family meeting agenda. Please work together to pick some topics to discuss during your next few family meetings.*
- Guide the family on making the family meeting strengths-based, such as including a time for family members to give compliments or messages of appreciation to one another.
- Ask: *What are some topics you and your family have decided on that you are comfortable sharing?*

Skills of the Day: Solving Problems as a Family (30 minutes)

- **Exercise 2: Worksheet: S.N.A.P. Problem-Solving Model**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/SNAPProblemSolving_0.pdf

- Say: *Now that we know how to meet as a family, we want to also learn how to solve problems as a family. We are going to discuss a great problem solving tool that can be used at your family meetings.*
- Say: *As a foster/adoptive family, you are part of a new family and there may be problems that may arise that can cause conflict in the home like with any family. We emphasize a team approach in solving problems as a way of not only bonding with your family, but making sure that every voice is heard.*
- Say: *Please identify a current problem that is going on in your home. Examples could include child having difficulty cleaning their room or doing their homework in the evenings or the family not spending enough time together:*
 - We use the acronym S.N.A.P. to help us problem solve in four steps:
 - **S**tate the problem
 - **N**ame the goal (realistic and specific in one sentence)
 - **A**ll possible solutions (make a list of all the possible actions you could take; when done as a family encourage the caregiver to have options proposed by both the caregiver(s) and child. The goal here is to be creative, so even wacky solutions should be included in the list).

- Pick the best one and try it out (evaluate the pros and cons of each option, reach a decision about which action you want to try, try it and review it).
- Example of S.N.A.P.:
 - State the problem: Leaving toys out in the backyard
 - Name the goal: By the end of the week all the toys will be put away in the backyard
 - Actions:
 - Use a magic vacuum to scoop up all the toys
 - Put toys away after you play with them
 - The whole family helps clean up the toys in the backyard on Fridays and gets pizza as a reward
 - One person cleans the backyard every week
 - Buy storage bins and leave them in the backyard to remind us to clean up the toys
 - Pick the best one and try it out: The whole family helps clean up the toys in the backyard on Fridays and gets pizza as a reward
- Ask: *Parents/caregivers, what are thoughts about this problem solving technique? Children/teens, did you find it helpful? How was it helpful?*

Skills of the Day: Family Fun Activity (10 minutes)

Say: We learned about how to hold family meetings, how to solve family problems in these meetings, and now we want to teach you a family-fun activity you could do to end your family meetings. There are a few options for family-fun activities.

- **Exercise 3: Worksheet: Family Collage**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/Familycollage.pdf

- *Say: This activity you could do with your family is the Family Collage. For this activity, you need some art supplies – a poster board, glue sticks, scissors, magazines, stickers, family pictures, etc.*
- *Say: The only rule in making this collage is that everyone in the family must agree on what is put in it. The theme of the collage can focus on items that represent your family, who you are as a family, what you value as a family, or what makes you a family. The options are endless!*
- *Say: The point of this activity is to work on a creative project that allows your family to work together, express yourselves artistically, spend time creating something artistic, and make something that will represent your values, family intentions, and unique family expression.*

- **Exercise 4: Worksheet: Family Statements**

https://nfrc.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/Family%20Statements_WWR.pdf

- *Say: This activity is one we are going to do as a family right now. It is called Family Statements and it is a list of statements for you to fill out together as a family. Let's spend some time filling it out and come back together as a group.*
- If time permits to complete this worksheet during the group, ask: What is something you have learned about your family through these statements? What was fun about filling out these statements?

Wrap Up (10 minutes)

- Remind the family of the key takeaways of this session:
 - Family meetings are important because they make families feel like a priority when you set aside time for each other and it is a great opportunity for open communication among family members.
 - Having a weekly time set aside could also serve as a space to discuss any problems or challenges going on in the home
 - Problem-solving can be a team-based approach where everyone can contribute to the solution
 - Family-fun activities are a good way to end the family meeting and bring people closer together in a creative and fun manner
 - Utilize the How to Hold a Family Meeting, SNAP, and Family Collage or Statement activities to assist you with your next family meeting
- Ask each family member to set and share a personal goal to practice during the next week
- Ask the family to discuss one thing they will take away from today's session