

Guideline for Effective Family Meetings



Maintaining a balanced lifestyle involves more than financial health; it's about gracefully handling life's challenges with the right support. Family meetings, whether for vacations, financial decisions, or health discussions, can sometimes become tense. To avoid discomfort and ensure everyone feels heard, it's important to plan these gatherings with clear intentions and objectives.

Guidelines to Consider

Effective family meetings require clear communication about the purpose, rules, and expected outcomes. Treating family time as sacred, especially during significant events, is crucial. These meetings aren't just for decision-making but also for brainstorming and aligning on important issues.

Preparing for a family meeting means setting the stage for open, inclusive discussions. When sensitive topics arise, such as care decisions or health concerns, a neutral facilitator can help maintain a safe, balanced environment. By establishing a clear agenda and engaging everyone constructively, family meetings can be meaningful and productive.

Issues to Avoid

For family meetings to be effective, it's crucial that participants understand the meeting's dynamics and what they stand to gain—this is the essence of 'what's in it for me' (WIIFM). Frustration arises when families fail to prepare members for their roles and how to engage. Preparation may include pre-reading or preliminary discussions to foster engagement and awareness.

A common issue is an overloaded agenda, which can overwhelm participants and bury important topics. It's essential to prioritize and focus on what's achievable within the allotted time. Starting a meeting with a 'parking lot' approach allows for the capture of valuable ideas that may not be the main focus but are worth discussing in the future. This method involves using a flip chart to note points, empowering participants to contribute actively. Encouraging everyone to take ownership of the meeting, rather than leaving it solely to the facilitator, ensures a more democratic and engaging process.

Avoiding an excessive agenda, insufficient preparation, and misplaced priorities, while promoting participant empowerment, are key to successful family meetings.



Participation

To foster participation in family meetings, it's important to respect the power of silence. Society often rushes to fill quiet moments, but in meetings, these pauses can be valuable. They give participants time to gather thoughts and contribute meaningfully. Embracing this discomfort can be beneficial.

When tension arises during a family meeting, instead of spotlighting reluctant individuals, a break can help. This pause allows the facilitator to check in with attendees privately, addressing any discomfort without public scrutiny. Upon reconvening, acknowledging the group's feelings without singling anyone out encourages open dialogue.

It's essential to navigate these delicate situations with discretion and sensitivity. Recognizing when to continue the discussion or when to pause for further reflection is key to maintaining a safe and productive meeting environment.

Opposing Forces

In family meetings, presenting a contrarian view can be a strategic way to ignite discussion and ensure all perspectives are considered. However, it's important to foster a safe environment where everyone feels comfortable to speak. The key is not to provoke but to encourage thoughtful debate.

When sensitive topics arise, it's better to address them directly rather than avoiding them. Acknowledging the 'elephant in the room' sets the stage for open dialogue. It's crucial to respect the emotional charge of these topics and approach them with care, without making promises that everything will be resolved immediately.

Creating a space where family members can express their thoughts and feelings honestly, while respecting differing opinions, is essential. This approach helps to work towards solutions that everyone can accept, even if it involves compromises. The goal is to ensure that no one leaves feeling hurt or unheard, establishing a foundation for productive and respectful family interactions.

In conflict resolution, the concept of 'triangulation' often involves a neutral third party who listens to both sides without taking sides. This neutral party, often an advisor, is sought for peacekeeping rather than conflict resolution. It's crucial for the conflicting parties to engage in productive dialogue directly, expressing their feelings and triggers openly to foster understanding and reduce resentment.

Conflict Resolution Tools

When addressing conflicts, it's important to create a space where all parties can pause and reflect. Providing feedback helps individuals understand the impact of their tone and words. Encouraging empathy and self-awareness can shift the focus from control to constructive conversation.

To encourage listening, framing the request as an opportunity for mutual understanding can be effective. It's about creating harmony and finding solutions that respect all opinions, even if it means relinquishing some control.

Recognizing the signs of disengagement, such as apathy or distraction, is key to redirecting the conversation towards a more productive and inclusive outcome. The ultimate goal is to achieve a resolution that aligns with the collective vision of success, fostering a harmonious environment.

Avoiding Triggers

In family meetings, it's appropriate to encourage respectful communication, especially when discussions become personal or heated. Prompting someone to rephrase their comments can defuse tension and maintain decorum. Preparing individuals on how to conduct themselves is also beneficial.

Continuous communication is key, not just during meetings but also through casual interactions like texts or emojis. These interactions build rapport and ease the intensity of in-person discussions.

While virtual meetings are convenient for routine matters, they lack the intimacy needed for deeper conversations. In-person meetings allow for a more profound connection and should be chosen for significant family discussions. It's not always about making decisions; sometimes, it's about community, feedback, and shared experiences. Balancing business with family fun can make in-person gatherings more meaningful and enjoyable.

Creating A Legacy

Creating a legacy is about the impact you make through your actions and values, not just at life's end but each day. Alfred Nobel's story exemplifies this; he shifted his legacy from the inventor of dynamite to the founder of the Nobel Prizes, choosing to be remembered for peace rather than destruction.

It is important to build a balanced lifestyle that includes financial stability and the ability to gracefully handle life's challenges. We need to understand the significance of family meetings as a tool for decision-making, brainstorming, and aligning on key issues, while also addressing the need for clear communication, preparation, and the right support for such gatherings.





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