

Family meeting: powerful tool for positive change

Conflicts! Daily life is filled with them. The kids are always leaving their toys out. Your teen plays his stereo too loud. Your youngest conveniently forgets to bring her dish to the sink after multiple reminders. Sibling wars break out every 15 minutes. Would you like an effective and peaceful way to resolve family problems? It's time for a family meeting.

Family meetings bring children and parents together to solve problems, make decisions, and give support to each other. It's a respectful format where everyone's opinion matters. Everyone has a voice. Even the youngest member of the family can contribute.

To run family meetings effectively, there are a few guidelines to keep in mind. Pick the same day and time each week for your meeting. The consistency creates a positive family habit. Don't allow distractions to interfere with the meeting. Let the answering machine take phone calls, and resist the urge to

schedule other activities during family meeting time.

Don't force

Invite your children to attend the meetings. Don't force them to attend. Simply tell them that any decision made at the family meeting applies to everyone whether they attend or not. One child was heard saying, "I better not miss a family meeting or else my family might decide to leave me to do all the chores this week!"

The key to a successful family meeting is to create an environment of respect. Avoid using meetings as a forum for criticizing or imposing your will on the kids. Focus the family's attention on looking for solutions. Tell them that together, the family can come up with ideas that everyone can feel good about. This is more empowering than blaming, and ridiculing. It encourages the kids to see themselves as people who can work together to make things better.

Some typical topics brought up at family meetings include:

chores, allowance increases, curfew, family rules, homework, difficult sibling issues, family goals, schedules, family entertainment ideas, or household issues such as lights being left on, cupboards being left open, or toys being left out.

The first time you run a family meeting start on a positive note. Perhaps together the family can choose an activity to do over the weekend, or decide together on a gift for grandma's birthday. Remember to keep family meetings short, especially if your children are very young. Goodwill fades when meetings drag on.

Take turns running the family meeting. Young children love running family meetings and by following a consistent format, they'll know just what to do. Here is one typical format: Ask, "Does anyone have any old business?" This would be any topic from the previous week's meeting that needs revisiting. Ask, "Does anyone have any new business?" This is the time to bring up any new issues. Each

issue is discussed until everyone agrees on a plan of action. Kids are more likely to follow through on decisions that they help make. End the meeting with compliments. Each member of the family gives a compliment, something they like or admire about each other. Some families also have each member compliment themselves. This is a powerful way for children to focus on the positive. For example, "I studied all week for my spelling test, and I got an A," or "I'm proud of myself for reading a book to my little sister," or "I learned how to whistle."

Take notes

During the meeting have someone take notes. It is helpful to review decisions made at the family meeting and post them on the refrigerator as a reminder. All decisions made at the family meeting stay in place at least until the next meeting. If everyone agrees to place their dirty clothes into the hamper without being reminded, and one child

consistently "forgets," the next family meeting can address this issue and a consequence can be decided by the group for anyone who doesn't follow the rule.

Have an agenda sheet available for the next family meeting. Instead of giving immediate attention to every problem the children bring up, suggest they add it to next week's agenda. This gives the children time to think about possible solutions to their issue and many times it is resolved or a plan is formed before the next meeting.

Many families choose to end their family meetings with a fun activity. Consider playing a game of cards, watching a video together, going on a bike ride, popping popcorn or reading a story. These are enjoyable ways to build positive memories around the family meeting.

Family meetings help the whole family increase skills in listening, speaking in ways that bring about cooperation, problem solving, and decision making. Children who take part in regu-

PARENTS CORNER



Marilyn Suttle

lar family meetings learn that they can make a difference. Marilyn Suttle presents skill building seminars. She can be reached via E-mail at Msuttle@aol.com.

Temple Kol Ami honors octogenarian rabbi with many events

Temple Kol Ami is planning an entire year of celebratory events to honor Rabbi Ernst Conrad, the temple's founding rabbi emeritus, who recently celebrated his 80th birthday.

A Shabbat service and luncheon is planned June 23. Guest speaker will be the Rt. Rev. Coleman McGhee, retired Episcop-

opal bishop, who served with Rabbi Conrad on the Coalition of Human Rights.

Another upcoming event includes Rabbi Ernst Conrad Day at Tiger Stadium on Sunday, Aug. 19, at which the rabbi will throw the opening pitch. He did the same thing five years ago to mark his 75th birthday.

Born in Berlin in 1921, Ernst Conrad was educated in German public schools until Kristallnacht when all Jews were expelled from school. He completed high school in a Jewish school. His widowed mother worked in a senior care facility. As the Nazis rose to power, Ernst was saved from slavery and death by rela-

tives in Cincinnati, where he continued his education at the University of Cincinnati, where he graduated with a major in classics.

He next studied at Hebrew Union College. Following his ordination in 1947, he served congregations in Maryland, North Carolina and Pontiac,

Mich. He also served as chaplain at Pontiac State Hospital and as Jewish student adviser at Oakland University.

His wife, Nathalie, has been music director at Temple Kol Ami since its inception. Rabbi Conrad founded the temple in 1966 and since 1986 has served as its founding rabbi emeritus.

At age 80, he remains a board member of the advisory board of the Michigan Anti-Defamation League, the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, Oakland Community Services, National Conference for Community and Justice and National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Garden contest seeking entries

The Farmington Garden Club will be sponsoring the 2001 Good Neighbor Garden Contest. Recommendations are now being taken. Entries must be postmarked no later than Saturday, July 14.

You may enter your own garden or a friend or neighbor's garden (with their permission). Gardens must be non-professional and residential, located between Haggerty and Inkster, Eight Mile and 14 Mile in Farmington or Farmington Hills.

Awards will be given from English Gardens and Somerset Collection. Judging will be from July 18 through Aug. 3.

Gift certificate winners from last year are ineligible for judging this year. For more information, call 563-0986.

See coupon at right.

JCC meeting

The Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit will have its annual meeting 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Kahn Building on the Applebaum Campus in West Bloomfield. A dessert reception will precede the meeting at 7 p.m.

The meeting will be the occasion for the election and installation of officers and the presentation of leadership awards. It also will serve as the start of the JCC's 75th anniversary celebration. The public is invited.

The Farmington Garden Club
GOOD NEIGHBOR GARDEN CONTEST

Enter your neighbors, a friend, or your own garden in the 16th Annual Good Neighbor Contest sponsored by the Farmington Garden Club.

ELIGIBLE: All nonprofessional gardeners living in Farmington or Farmington Hills between Eight Mile and Fourteen Mile, and Haggerty and Inkster. (2000 Good Neighbor Garden Contest Gift Certificate & Cash winners are ineligible.) Please obtain your friend or neighbor's permission before entering their garden.

DEADLINE: Entry forms must be postmarked no later than July 14, 2001.

JUDGING: The week of July 18 thru August 3, 2001.

AWARDS: English Garden's "Flower of the Month" and Somerset Collection gift certificates.

NOTE: Entries will be judged on Creativity and Design. For additional information call 248-553-0986

Entry Form
2001 Good Neighbor Garden Contest

Garden Owner: _____

Address and Location of Garden: _____

Telephone Number (with Area Code) _____

Recommended by: _____

Telephone Number: _____

(Please obtain your friend or neighbor's permission before entering their garden.) All pets should be kept indoors while judging is taking place. 2000 Good Neighbor contest winners are ineligible.

Mail Entry Form to: J. Hunt
29425 Parkside Dr.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331

ALL ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2001

Youth theatre workshop June 28-29

For youth interested in honing theater skills, or learning more about theater, the Michigan Youth Theater workshop will provide the ticket. On Thursday and Friday, June 28-29, students 7-18 will be able to try a variety of sessions including make-up, costumes, directing, improvisation, and more. The workshops will take place from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Costick Center on 11 Mile Road in Farm-

ington Hills; the cost is \$25/day or \$40 for two days.

For information, call the Special Services Department at (248) 473-1800.

A feature of the June 28 program will be stage-fighting workshops conducted by nationally recognized Ring of Steel. Ring of Steel boasts 17 film credits, including the movie "Hook." Students will not only see realistic fighting techniques, but also

a variety of prop weapons and learn the actual techniques of fighting choreography.

The Michigan Youth Theater is a touring company of young actors aged 7-17 that are known throughout Michigan. Originally formed to present exclusively the works of Shakespeare, the group has recently branched out to present other plays. They can be seen yearly at the Michigan Renaissance Festival.

OPEN HOUSE

Join us for tours and refreshments
Saturday June 23rd and Sunday, June 24th
From 12 to 5 pm
Waltonwood of Rochester Hills
(248) 375-2500
waltonwoodrochester@earthlink.net
3250 Walton Boulevard (West of Adams on the north side of Walton Blvd.)

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