

Sue Atkins
The Parenting Expert

Parenting Made Easy System

**NAVIGATING THE CHOPPY WATERS OF
THE TEENAGE YEARS**

DAY 5: FAMILY TALK TIME

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www.sueatkinsparentingcoach.com

In a nutshell – Today is all about family talk time. I'll tell you why it's important, how to implement it into your family routine and schedule, and how to get the most positive and effective results from it ...

Welcome back!

When I coach parents I often encourage them to have regular family chats or "family meetings". They are a great way sort out the usual ups and downs of family life as they help you all to go in the same direction together and help get things out in the open.

Getting your kids involved is a great opportunity to make them feel part of the decision-making process at home. Creating solutions to family niggles together provides a real incentive for everyone to co-operate.

If you're interested in trying this idea here are some ways to organise yourselves:

- Choose a natural time when you will all be together like at a mealtime.
- Allow the conversation to have a purpose and a gentle agenda of airing family niggles, stresses or flash points.
- Develop a set of "Family Meeting Rules" that suit your family at your first meeting and be sure to write them down so everyone is clear about what to expect.
- Have the family meeting at the same time and place each week or month as it builds routine and expectations.
- Make sure that ALL your family members are present and have a chance to be heard.
- It's often a good idea to put all decisions from the meeting in writing and have everyone sign the sheet when the meeting ends to show their commitment to what's been talked about and agreed - get one of the kids to design it on the computer!
- Keep the meeting positive and have rules against disrespectful behaviours such as interrupting, insulting, yelling or laughing at other people's suggestions.
- Avoid distractions - so turn off the TV and radio, and take the phone off the hook so you can relax and enjoy chatting together.

Family meeting rules

Only you will know which of these might work for your family. Your rules might include:

1. The person holding the chicken egg cup is the person allowed to speak and no-one is allowed to interrupt them
2. We all let the other person say what's on their mind without arguing or criticising them
3. We don't storm off and leave the table until we've all spoken
4. We turn off the TV while we're eating together

Remember the whole point of the chat or family meeting is to spend constructive, quality time discussing the concerns and issues which need to be addressed. So think of it a bit like a business meeting but with a more relaxed atmosphere - and plan an agenda.

The agenda

- An agenda helps you to discuss progress, problems, and changes over the week and decide on possible solutions.
- It encourages each family member to give positive feedback to everyone else and allows you to discuss the roles and expectations of each family member.
- It's also a place to sort out your plans and agendas for the coming week so no one feels left out or doesn't know what everyone else is up to.
- It's an opportunity to look at how the jobs in the house are getting done and who does what - and also a good place to discuss your family rules and the consequences for breaking them.
- Finally it's a good idea to relax and have fun together so set aside a short period of time to play a game or chat and laugh together as a family when the "talk time" is over.

Here are some suggestions for topics that are really fascinating to explore with your whole family either once week, once a month or now and again - whatever suits the rhythm and style of your family.

Taking the initiative

1. What does it mean to "take initiative"?
2. Name three things that you have done lately to demonstrate initiative.
3. What can you do this week to show that you are taking initiative?
4. How would things be different in our home if nobody took initiative?

Being helpful

1. What does it mean to be helpful?
2. Who was the last person that you helped? How did you help them?
3. Who was the last person that helped you? How did that person help you?
4. Talk about whether there is ever a time when you should NOT help someone?

Seeking attention

1. Chat about what it means to seek attention? Are there good ways to get attention....and bad ways?
2. What are some of the ways that YOU seek attention? Are these positive ways?
3. What are some new ways that you could seek positive attention?
4. How does it make you feel when nobody notices you?

Being responsible

1. Talk about what it means to be responsible?
2. Name three things that you have done lately to demonstrate responsibility.
3. What can you do this week to show that you are being responsible?
4. How would things be different in your home if nobody was responsible?

Now it's your turn!

Your mission for this week is to sit down together with your family, introduce the idea of family meetings, and have a discussion about your collective ideas for setting up House Rules.

Explain that you'd like to improve the atmosphere in the house, and that you'd like input and suggestions from every member of the family to help with this. Ask each member of your family to think of at least one house rule and write it down

When you've done this, pin the rules up somewhere where everyone can see them clearly and easily - maybe one of your children would like to design something on the computer to make the rules look attractive?

Then arrange another family meeting for the following week, at the same time, to review and talk about how it's all going. (Regular times are always a good idea so you don't forget to do it!)

This idea can be amended and tweaked to fit in with your family but the idea is just to get you talking properly and calmly about stuff that drives you mad and finding a good time to regularly do it.

A Quick Recap

- We have learned that regular family chats or "family meetings" are a great way sort out the usual ups and downs of family life.
- Develop a set of "Family Meeting Rules" that suit your family at your first meeting and be sure to write them down so everyone is clear about what to expect.
- Have regular meetings at the same time each week.
- Include your children in the rule making, drawing up the agenda and contribution to the conversation at each meeting.

Next time ...

We are going to look at how to handle anger positively ...

See you then!



Sue Atkins

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