

Treasure in Family Meetings



Family meetings produce many benefits:

1. a predictable model for solving problems, making plans, and deciding on major shifts in rules and boundaries;
2. teaching children that their input counts and giving them a life-long positive view of how a family works;
3. giving children a predictable place for sharing feelings about current issues in their lives, which reduces anxiety and behavioral problems;
4. providing regular opportunities for everyone to be proactive and develop assertiveness skill; and
5. developing a forum for individual problem solving with the input of others.

Suggested Rules for Family Meetings

- Meet regularly, not just when there is a problem.
- Eliminate distractions.
- When problem-solving, focus on “what” rather than “why.” Never use family meetings to target blame or attack a member.
- Identify types of decisions previously made by one person or “on the fly” and make them part of the family meeting (i.e., changes in allowances, vacation plans, likes and dislikes about running the house, rules, assignment of chores, etc.)
- Meet in the same place.
- When stressful life events and occasions arise, think “family meeting.”

--FrontLine Employee

Assertiveness Formula

Being assertive with others is an important social skill that gets easier with practice. Unfortunately, name calling, blaming, and words of anger often get mixed up with our attempts at being assertive. This spoils the response we want from others, making us less willing to try assertive skills. Here's one of many classic formulas to learn and teach:

I feel _____ when you _____
because _____, and I want _____.

Trace That Tune

Music isn't necessary for human survival, but has appeared in every culture. Why? Here are three theories.

Good Parents? Musicians?

Why should groupies favor people who make music? Because it is a powerful indicator of fitness—all parts of the brain must function well to perceive and produce music. Dancing indicates a robust body. Together, these skills suggest someone who has good genes and would be a good parent. The ability to create music may be a sexually selected adaptation, in this evolutionary view. Good male musicians who appeal to females will get the chance to send more of their genes into the next generation — thank the groupies for that.

Group Think

Another theory also sees music as an adaptation, but one shaped by natural selection, not sexual selection. Music helps synchronize the actions of a group. Chanting in chorus may have been a part of hominid evolution that occurred at the time we split from chimps. It may have preceded language.

The Brain Just Likes It

What could move otherwise honest people to download songs without paying? Perhaps music's primal appeal: It taps into several of our neural systems, including those connected to: signals in emotional sounds, such as baby expressions, language, sense of hearing and rhythmic motor control. Each of these systems evolved for its own obvious reasons; music itself did not, say some psychologists. It just happens to stimulate them all at once, which is why it is so powerful.

--Dith Pran/The New York Times

Exercise Made Easier- Just in Time for Spring!

If you don't have time for exercise wearing a pedometer may be an answer for you. A pedometer clips to your waistband and measures distance walked. Studies show that wearing a pedometer motivates you to find ways during the day to make it click off distance. You are more likely to take the stairs, park farther from the office building, or walk outside during lunch simply because you are wearing it. The pedometer technique is so effective that *Health Partners*, a Minneapolis-based managed care organization has promoted use of the device since 1999.





When a Heart Attack Strikes What to Look for and What to Do

Researchers may still be investigating and theorizing, but there's consensus among medical experts about what to do if you feel heart attack symptoms. Here's advice from *The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women* about what to notice and actions to take:

Remember, what you may feel is:

- > Chest pain or discomfort, pain in one arm or both, pain radiating to your neck or jaw, sweating, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting or unexplained fatigue.
- > Right away, take medication. Chew one adult-strength (325 mg) tablet of uncoated aspirin (if you can take aspirin). If you have been prescribed nitroglycerin, immediately place one tablet under your tongue as well. Take a second nitro if the discomfort doesn't stop in five minutes, and a third after five more minutes if the discomfort still hasn't gone away. Even if the symptoms subside, call your doctor.
- > If the symptoms continue, call 9-1-1. The point is to get to the hospital fast— new treatments, including clot-busting drugs and coronary angioplasty (also known as balloon angioplasty), can reopen a clogged blood vessel. These treatments reduce damage to the heart muscle and save lives— but only if they are given immediately.

Best Strategy: Be Proactive

Being prepared for a heart attack is good, being proactive is better.

Get regular exercise, eat a heart-healthy diet and maintain a healthy weight. Know your risks, get screened. Have your blood pressure checked at every doctor's visit and get your cholesterol checked at least at five-year intervals starting at age 20, and blood sugar checked regularly.

--from Women's Health/John Muir/Mt. Diablo Health System



Drug Class Overview

No formulary should restrict itself to one SSRI for treatment of depression.

Experts say SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) tend to have similar efficacy but different side-effect profiles, and patients who don't respond to one might respond to another

Today, (SSRIs) are the treatment of choice for major depression (and may also be used for conditions such as anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress). SSRIs enhance a patient's mood by boosting levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, a chemical that transmits electrical signals between brain cells. It may take as long as four to eight weeks of treatment before the patient feels the full effect of SSRIs.

"Generic Prozac is a reasonable first choice when there are no concerns about drug-drug interactions," says Dr. Mark Abramowicz. "Zoloft, Celexa or Lexapro might be a better choice in situations where drug interactions are a concern. No formulary should restrict itself to one SSRI, because patients who don't respond to one may respond to another."

Child Safety a Concern

The British Committee on Safety of Medicines recently urged physicians not to use any SSRIs (except Prozac) in treating children and adolescents with depression. After reviewing a number of studies, the British regulators concluded that they present a significant risk of hostility, suicidal thoughts and behavior, although no suicides were reported in any of the studies.

There are no convincing data showing that SSRIs are less safe in children than in adults, experts say. The benefit of SSRIs in preventing suicide among depressed children and adolescents is clearly greater than the potential risk.

Of course, all depressed patients should be monitored for suicide, whether they are taking medications or not. At press time, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) planned to discuss the issue at a joint meeting of two advisory committees this coming month.

--by Elaine Zablocki--(Managed Healthcare Executive 2/2004)

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