



SAMPLE FAMILY AGREEMENT

1. Everyone in the family has a right to speak about his feelings and concerns.
2. When we meet as a family to discuss issues, we will use guidelines for fair fighting (overleaf).
3. We will hold Joseph accountable for his behavior. if he does something illegal or harmful, he will be expected to deal with the consequences. We will not rescue him from experiencing the consequences of his behavior.
4. During holidays we will focus on celebrating and leave discussing problems for another scheduled time.
5. If Joseph decides to go off his medication, he will be expected to move out of the house. He can only remain living with Mom and Dad as long as he remains on his medication.
6. Dad will go into the hospital for an evaluation of his drinking habits. As a family we will respect the hospital's assessment of whether or not Dad has a drinking problem.
7. In the event of a crisis, we will take the time to problem-solve as a family.
8. We will hold family meetings once a month.

We agree that the statements above are fair and agree to their conditions and terms. Signatures of all those involved:

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Fair Fighting

Once you get together and start making decisions, there is bound to be some conflict. Angry, hurt feelings are likely to arise and a fight may break out. But you and your family can survive conflicts. As long as they don't block open communication, arguments can even assist decision-making. You don't have to storm out of the house—you can stay and fight, as long as you fight fair.

When you discover yourself in the midst of an argument, consider the following guidelines for expressing your anger:

- As you start feeling angry, acknowledge these feelings with a simple statement like, "I feel angry about..."
- Accept that each member of the family has a right to his angry feelings. Try not to take someone else's feelings personally.
- Acknowledge that everyone is responsible for his own feelings of anger. •Avoid such statements as "You make me angry," or "You always do this to me."
- Do not start a family meeting or important discussion when someone is tired. Imaginative problem-solving is difficult someone is tired.
- Do not belittle or make light of anyone's angry feelings
- Deal with one issue at a time. Do not overload the argument with more than one concern.
- When you share your feelings be as specific as you can about what is upsetting you. State your concern in clear objective terms: "I am angry that you went to visit John in the hospital instead of attending my volleyball game.
- Do not assume you know what others in the family are thinking or feeling until you ask.
- Do not tell others what they "should" feel or think.
- No name calling or put downs, since this will only cause others to get defensive or withdraw
- Avoid sarcasm. Sarcasm is a way we cover up our true feelings of anger, sadness, or hurt. It also alienates others and sounds like a put down.
- Try not to bring up past mistakes, hurts, or grievances; talk about present issues and grievances only.
- Even though it may be embarrassing or painful, have the courage to admit when you are wrong. This encourages others in the family to do the same. •When the communication gets tense, think compromise. Try to avoid "right and wrong" formulations and focus on finding points of similarity and agreement.