



# FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



FAMILY

## Our Family is Creative! Collaborative Problem Solving

Many of us are struggling every day. Sometimes the stress and anxiety of navigating the pandemic makes it seem hard to solve problems. It can be more difficult to feel safe and secure when our family routines may be different. The stressors may also increase when we don't know what to expect each day. More often our families are sharing space and resources and may be looking for better ways to discuss problems and conflicts before they get worse.

### Family Meetings

Creative and successful problem solving is often done together as a group. Holding a family meeting is a great way to brainstorm family goals, expectations, and to solve problems. During times of change and adversity, family meetings are a great way to check in and see how everyone is doing. Family meetings can also help family members understand each other better, have better communication, work towards solutions, and can be fun!

#### *Family Meeting Activity*

When thinking about having a family meeting it is important to get buy-in from all family members. Family meetings can help bring your family together in many ways. Consider using your family meeting as a time to solve problems and come up with solutions together. You may wish to make regular family meetings a new routine. They can be something for family members to look forward to and rely on.

- **Make a routine** - Encourage all family members to decide on a regular meeting time.
- **Be flexible about the format** - Family meetings can take place virtually or by phone if everyone is not able to meet in the same place.
- **Create rules for your family meeting** - Encourage your family members to think of rules they think might be helpful. Examples: One person may talk at a time, electronic devices are not allowed during the meeting and use kind words and respect each other's thoughts and opinions.
- **Everyone gets to share** - Family meetings are a time for your family to talk about the kinds of activities they want to do together and to talk about what they may be having a hard time with and come up with solutions. Each of your family members gets a chance to share.
- **Keep it positive** - When your family members have different opinions, remind them to keep their comments and suggestions positive and to work together toward a solution. You can offer praise, model encouragement and active listening while supporting everyone.
- **Finish with fun** - End the family meeting by encouraging everyone to share one thing learned or gained. You may wish to close with an activity, game, story or a fun plan!

The above family meeting content was closely adapted from materials prepared by our external partners at Project FOCUS, Nathanson Family Resilience Center, University of California Los Angeles. We appreciate their generosity. To learn more about how to help families develop and plan family meetings, you may wish to read:

- [How to Hold a Family Meeting](#)
- [Planning a Family Meeting](#)

### *Internal Actions*

Set clear priorities and realistic goals and discuss action steps to reach them. If possible, try and develop a “Plan B” to help with challenges that may be ahead.

### *External Actions*

Trying to figure out work and school or childcare may put additional stress and anxiety on the family. Create a plan to reach out to friends, family, and the community to help with unplanned challenges. Create a system of shared relationships to help each other get through the challenges ahead.

To learn more about the science behind the importance of family communication and family meetings, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Mechanisms of Risk and Resilience in Military Families: Theoretical and Empirical Basis of a Family-Focused Resilience Enhancement Program.](#)



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College of Health and Human Sciences

## Welcome to Families Tackling Tough Times Together!

We hope you find the enclosed ideas and suggestions helpful as you care for your family during the pandemic. We know the pandemic is a very big challenge. How families cope can affect both parents and children for a long time.

We are scientists, educators, and students from Purdue University, and we are here to help! For nine weeks this fall, we will provide weekly collections of ideas for families to use to build on their strengths.

These tools are free, flexible, and informed by science. They are designed for families of all types, with tailored suggestions for children, youth, young adults and older adults, and suitable for both civilian and military families. We hope that your family will try one activity each week!

### Would you like to earn financial rewards?

We especially welcome families living in the continental US who are interested in trying out project materials and telling us about their experiences. These families can earn financial rewards by sharing about one hour of their time over the next two months. Sign up now at the link below!

[https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ)

For more information

- Join the Families Together Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HHSFamiliesTogether/>
- Or visit the project website: <https://www.hhs.purdue.edu/families-together/>