

A FREE RESOURCE FROM ZIPHEALTHY

The Family Conversation Starter Kit

Structured talks for stressed, blended, and busy families

Worksheets, prompts & scripts for real family conversations

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Ground Rules for Family Meetings

Families who talk regularly tend to handle stress better — but only when the talking follows a few shared rules. Read these together before your first meeting. Post them somewhere everyone can see.

1. Speaker / Listener

Only one person talks at a time. Everyone else listens without planning their reply. A shared object (a pillow, a small stone, a spoon) can act as the "talking piece" — whoever holds it speaks; everyone else listens.

2. No Interrupting

- ☐ Let the speaker finish their full thought before responding.
- ☐ If you disagree, wait for your turn — write a one-word reminder note if you need to.
- ☐ Adults model this rule first. Kids copy what they see, not what they're told.

3. Repair-First Mindset

The goal of a family meeting is not to win an argument or assign blame. It is to understand each other and agree on one small next step. If a conversation gets heated, pause and use the phrase below before continuing.

Our Family's Reset Phrase

Example: "Let's slow down — we're on the same team."

4. Keep It Short and Regular

15–20 minutes, once a week, at a set time, beats a long talk that only happens when something goes wrong. Consistency matters more than length.

Family Meeting Agenda Template

Photocopy this page or copy the format into a notebook. Keep meetings to four simple parts — wins, issues, one change, and a fun plan — so everyone knows what to expect.

PART	PROMPT
1. Wins	What went well this week? Each person names one thing — theirs or someone else's.
2. Issues	What's been hard or annoying? State it as your own experience ("I felt..."), not an accusation.
3. One Change	Pick just one issue and agree on one small, specific change to try this week.
4. Fun Plan	Choose one small thing to look forward to together before the next meeting.

This Week's Meeting

DATE & WHO ATTENDED

WINS

ISSUE DISCUSSED

OUR ONE CHANGE

FUN PLAN

40 Prompts by Age Band

Pick one prompt per person at dinner, in the car, or during a family meeting. There are no wrong answers — the goal is talking, not testing.

Young Kids

1. What made you laugh today?
2. If you could have any animal as a pet, what would it be?
3. What's your favorite thing about our family?
4. What was tricky today, and what helped?
5. Who were you kind to today?
6. What do you want to learn to do?
7. What's a rule you wish we had?
8. What made you feel brave this week?
9. What's something you're proud of?
10. If you had a magic wand, what would you fix?
11. What's your favorite family memory?
12. Who helped you today?
13. What's one thing you want to do this weekend?

Adults

1. What's been on your mind that we haven't talked about?
2. What's a small thing I do that helps you?
3. What do you need more of from this family right now?
4. What's a decision coming up we should plan for together?
5. What's something you're carrying alone that you could share?
6. What's working well between us right now?
7. What's one thing you'd like us to do differently?

Teens

1. What's something you needed this week that you didn't get?
2. What's a rule at home that feels outdated?
3. What's stressing you out right now?
4. What do you wish adults understood about your day?
5. What's something you're figuring out about yourself?
6. When do you feel most respected at home?
7. What's a boundary you want to set?
8. What's something you're proud of that no one noticed?
9. What does support look like to you right now?
10. What's a friendship that matters to you and why?
11. What do you want more freedom to decide?
12. What's something you wish we asked about more?
13. What's one thing that would make this week easier?

Talking Across Two Households

Blended families carry conversations that biological-only households don't — new roles, split loyalties, and relationships still being built. A gentle understanding of "loyalty binds" can lower a lot of unspoken tension.

What Is a Loyalty Bind?

A loyalty bind happens when a child feels that liking, trusting, or getting close to a stepparent means being disloyal to their other parent. It is not a sign that something is wrong — it's a very common, very human response to change. Naming it out loud, without pressure, often brings relief to a child who has been quietly carrying it.

- ☐ Let the child set the pace of closeness with a stepparent — never insist on affection or a parenting title.
- ☐ Avoid asking a child to choose or compare parents, even lightly or as a joke.
- ☐ Say out loud: "You're allowed to like spending time with both households. That's not being unfair to anyone."
- ☐ Let biological parents lead on discipline at first; stepparents build authority slowly, through relationship.

Step-Relationship Conversation Starters

1. What's something that's felt confusing about our new family setup?
2. What's one thing that's actually going better than you expected?
3. Is there anything you wish I understood about how you see our family?
4. What would help you feel more at home in this house?
5. What's a name or word you're comfortable using for me right now?
6. Is there a tradition from your other household you'd like to keep here?
7. What's something new we could start together, just the two of us?

Conflict Cool-Down Protocol

Every family argues. What matters is having an agreed-upon way to pause before things escalate, and a way to reconnect afterward. Set this up on a calm day, before you need it.

Step 1 — Agree on a Time-Out Signal

Pick a word or gesture anyone in the family can use, no explanation required, to pause a conversation that's getting too hot.

OUR FAMILY'S SIGNAL

Step 2 — Set a Return Time

A time-out is not the end of the conversation — it's a pause with a plan to come back. Agree on roughly how long before you'll return to it (20–30 minutes is often enough to calm the body's stress response).

OUR DEFAULT RETURN TIME

Step 3 — Repair Statement Stems

When you come back together, open with one of these instead of restarting the argument:

"I'm sorry for the part I played in that — specifically ____."

"I got louder/quieter than I wanted to. Can we try again?"

"I think I understand your side better now. It sounds like ____."

"What do you need from me right now to feel okay again?"

Family Values & Goals Worksheet

Once a family has a shared conversation habit, it helps to name what you're actually working toward. Fill this out together — everyone gets a voice, even the youngest.

Three Words That Describe the Family We Want to Be

One Thing Each Person Is Proud Of Right Now

NAME

NAME

NAME

One Family Goal for This Month

WHAT'S ONE SMALL STEP TOWARD IT THIS WEEK?

Revisit this page in a month. Goals change — that's normal. What matters is that you're checking in together.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note on How to Use This Resource

This workbook is a free educational self-help resource. It is designed for general use by any family and does not constitute therapy, counseling, or any other clinical service. Using this material does not create a clinician-client relationship with ZipHealthy PLLC or with Stephen Velasquez. If your family is navigating a specific mental health concern, safety issue, or crisis, please reach out to a licensed professional directly.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY NEEDS SUPPORT NOW

Call or text 988
Text HOME to 741741
Call 911

If you'd like professional support: www.ziphealthy.com · (479) 259-1390

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