

OBSERVATION SHEET FOR FAMILY MEETINGS

Family meetings kill two birds with one stone: (1) they are a forum in which individuals can resolve problems and conflicts, and (2) they offer an opportunity to practice healthy dynamics. The *Observation Sheet for Family Meetings* provides a vehicle to help all family members become more aware of their interactions. With this awareness comes choice and change.

OBSERVATION SHEET FOR FAMILY MEETINGS

Directions: (1) After a discussion, each person uses suggested point values to rate family interactions. This can be done from memory or by listening to a tape recording. Totaling points and determining a percentage score can offer incentives for improvement. (2) When family members become familiar with ratings, use previous observations to change the way the family interacts in later discussions. The Family Questionnaire that follows the Observation Sheet can be used for initial discussions.

1. Strong Parental Leadership (10 points total) Score: _____
 - a. Parents are in charge of the discussion. They decide how to get started, when to do what, and keep the family on task. (2)
 - b. Although parents lead the discussion, they encourage input from others. (2)
 - c. If children give advise on running the discussion, the parents eventually resume charge. (2)
 - d. When there are difficulties reaching agreements, parents can make a final decision. (2)
 - e. It does not take excessively long for agreements to be reached. (2)
 2. Expression of Differences or Differentiation (10 points total) Score: _____
 - a. There are significant variations in individual opinions. (3)
 - b. Generally, the family considers several alternatives before making a decision. (3)
 - c. Family members disagree with each other as often as they agree with each other. (2)
 - d. Disagreements are stated clearly and agreements are finally reached. (Disagreements do not become fuzzy by changing the subject or bringing up unrelated issues.) (2)
- Note: There should be more differences of opinion in families with teenagers. Score items more generously in families with younger children.
3. Little Fusion or Attempts to Act as One (10 points total) Score: _____
 - a. Family members do not assume they know each other's responses. (3)
 - b. Family members do not speak for each other or answer a question for another person. (2)
 - c. Generally, family members express their opinions with the pronoun I, rather than saying, "We think . . ." (2)
 - d. The discussion is not rushed and sufficient time is used to draw out different ideas. (3)
 4. All Participants Have Influence (10 points total) Score: _____
 - a. One person does not do most of the talking. (2)
 - b. People do not address all statements to one person or talk through a go-between. (2)
 - c. Generally, everyone participates and has a voice on issues even though parents may make the final decision. (2)
 - d. One person's independent responses do not become the decision for the family. (2)
 - e. In two-parent families, both parents are involved in leading the exercise. (2)

5. People Deal Directly, with Few Alliances or Triangles (10 points total) Score: _____
- Children tend to agree with children and parents with parents. (3)
 - Alliances shift: one person agrees with someone at one time and then agrees with another person at another time. (3)
 - Two people do not present a united front, nor do they ally against the same person. (4)

Note: It is preferable for children to agree with children and parents with parents; however, some shifting in agreements across generations is fine.

6. There Is Good Contact without "Emotionally Cutting Off" from Others (10 points) Score: _____
- No one refuses to participate in the discussion. (2)
 - The family takes time with the discussion, enjoys it, and is able to make the contact with each other that such meetings require. (2)
- The following apply to the Family Questionnaire below:
- There is a balance between amount of time and activities the family wants to spend together and time they want apart from each other. (2)
 - There is not an odd-person-out who is cut off from contact with the family. (2)
 - There is not an odd-person-out who wants much more time and contact with the family (possibly causing others to cut off from him or her). (2)

Note: Score more leniently in families with teenagers.

TOTAL SCORE: _____ points out of 60

PERCENT: Total divided by 60: _____

FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: (1) Each family member independently fills out the questionnaire. Answers should reflect the way people want the family to be, not the way it currently operates. During the discussion, the family reaches a decision on what would be the best for the *whole* family. Record the final decision on a blank questionnaire. (2) A second discussion can take place using photocopies of the family's previous final decision. Family members now independently rank items in order. Assign numbers 1 and 2 to the two most important items and the numbers 8 or higher to the two least important items. The family then reaches a decision on the order of importance that items have to the family as a *whole*. Use observations from the first discussion to change the way the family interacts.

For me to feel a part of my family, we would:

- ___ Eat dinner together ___ nights a week.
- ___ Watch TV, play a game together, etc. ___ times a _____ (week, month)
- ___ Spend a maximum of ___ hours a day watching TV.
- ___ Spend ___ evenings at home or together a week.
- ___ Go to a movie or family outing together ___ times a _____ (week, month, year)
- ___ Go away for a weekend together (camping, to the beach) _____ times a year.
- ___ Go on vacation together for at least a week ___ times a year.
- ___ Worship together ___ times a _____ (week, month, year)
- ___ Other:
