



Having a Successful Family Meeting

Traumatic events involving the health and care of a loved one can be very stressful on a family. To minimize emotionally charged arguments and decisions, you may want to consider having family meetings and/or discussions to open communication regarding care decisions. By setting guidelines and objectives for each meeting, you may be able to minimize hurt feelings and arguments.

Here are some tips and resources to help you set up and run these important family meetings for your loved ones.

Identify a moderator. Depending on the family dynamic, it can be helpful to have an outside moderator such as a close family friend, a family minister or social worker from the hospital. Many times, it is necessary to have these meetings on conference calls or with some family members in attendance and some communicating via phone.

Establish a Code of Conduct for your family meetings. For example, you may want to prohibit interruptions to let people finish their thoughts and have their say. You may want to reiterate before each meeting that everyone must be respectful and on time. It is helpful to have an agenda consisting of the main topic/update about the loved one as well as the goal or answer you're seeking in the meeting.

Keep the agenda simple. When dealing with the health issues of a loved one, discussions and decisions can be emotionally charged. It is better to have a short, focused meeting dealing with the immediate issue at hand. This limits overwhelming feelings and getting off track.

Stay on topic. Allow everyone to voice opinions/concerns/questions/fears. Discuss regularity of meetings and let everyone voice their opinions on how much they want to be involved, how much information they want, and how often they want these family meetings.

If you feel you need more assistance, try these websites for details with challenging family dynamics:

<https://www.caregiver.org/holding-family-meeting>

<http://www.ec-online.net/Knowledge/Articles/familymeetings.html>