

# Pro-Active Parent Coaching: Facilitating the Family Meeting over Changing Roles and Responsibility

by Gregory Bland



“Thanks Mom, for entrusting responsibility to me as a young child, I know it has helped me get to where I am today!”

As our family's mature, we have the privilege of releasing more and more responsibility to our children as we prepare them for life outside our home. Our goal, as parents, of course is to equip our children with the necessary life skills they will need when they launch out from home on 'their own.'

I cannot think of a better place for our children to learn responsibility than within our loving and restorative homes.

As our children mature, they naturally have a growing desire and capacity to carry greater responsibility. We can naturally embrace this growth by giving responsibility in some of the simple day to day routines of home life. But, let me warn you, it's not about unilaterally assigning tasks to our children! There is a much healthier way to release responsibility which can be found through a simple "Pro-Active Parent Coaching" practice called the 'family meeting.'

## The Family Meeting:

Prior to 'calling' a family meeting, there are some basic principles to consider first.

- a) Resist calling a family meeting when you're upset or angry. Your attitude will set the tone for the meeting and you may adversely affect the outcome. Wait until you can dialogue openly, honestly, and lovingly as you facilitate the meeting.
- b) If you are married, it is essential that you as a couple are on the same page prior to the meeting. Preparation here is important. This ensures unity which is recognizable to the children, which will also greatly impact the flow of the meeting.
- c) Select a time and date which allows everyone to participate with sufficient uninterrupted time together.
- d) Inform the children of the purpose of the meeting, especially if family meetings are not a common practice within your family structure. Simply the idea of Mom and Dad calling a family 'meeting' may

unnecessarily instill fear and anxiety within their hearts and being clear about it's purpose can alleviate this.

(Personal note: I experimented with the need of stating the purpose of the meeting within our own family. During dinner, I informed the family we needed to have a brief family meeting following supper but did not disclose the purpose of the meeting. This created a recognizable anxiety within them. Afterward I asked how they felt about not knowing the purpose of the meeting prior and they unanimously agreed that they were nervous and didn't like it.)

**Purpose:**

We want to get together to talk about our changing roles and responsibility as you mature and grow in responsibility. We will take time to brainstorm ideas and ways in which our household can run in a healthy way. Then we will individually choose what responsibility we will carry to help the family as a whole.

(Although this article is focused upon a specific topic for the family meeting, the principles presented can be applied in other contexts)

**At the beginning of the family meeting affirm:** (this is a guideline only, take time to contextualize make the wording fit who you are as a person/family unit)

- In your communication set a tone of cooperation and sense that "we're all in this together," through this your child will begin to feel encouraged by their ability to contribute and play an important role in the overall function and health of your household.
- As parents, honor and affirm their worth, value, and importance to the family as a whole.
- Honor their maturity and the ways in which they have already carried responsibility in the past. (Be specific)
- In a positive way, share about the importance of every family member fulfilling their role for the household to function healthily, ie, not dependent upon one member of the family doing all the work. (Biblical Example: See 1 Corinthians 12 re: Body) (If Dad is facilitating this, it is a good opportunity to show value to Mom by stating that it isn't up to Mom to do all the housework but we all have a part to play in it.)
- Affirm that you value your child's input and desire to honor their ability to make decisions and offer their ideas for the health of the family.

**Ask:**

As you think about our household and what it takes to make it run, what things do you see that need to be cared for on a regular basis?

**Brainstorm.** (you can use a sheet of paper, computer, whatever you decide, simply make it visible so the whole family can view it) Allow the children to think through and generate ideas of their own. You may be surprised just how much they know about what it takes to run a household.

Feel free to allow silence as they think through this question! Depending on the maturity level of your child(ren) some may have a very good grasp on what it takes to run a household, others may be considering this for the first time. Let them think it through, without jumping in too quickly.

You may even find it helpful to ask “Is there anything else you can think of?” a few times, until they exhaust all of their ideas.

When they have exhausted their ideas and thoughts, you may add more for their consideration if needed.

### **Observing the List:**

As everyone observes the brainstorming list, you can affirm once again, that there is a lot of work that takes place in the regular function of a household. You can see why it takes more than one person to carry all the responsibility for a household to run well.

The idea here is to have the children recognize what is involved in the daily operations of the average household. As they begin to recognize this, we then move toward each person taking responsibility for some of the tasks within the household.

Have the children consider the following:

**Ask:** How often do each of these things need to be done?

Daily, Weekly, Monthly. (You may label them as such to keep the visual reality present.)

**Ask:** When you look at this list, there will be things you might enjoy doing and then there will be some things that you're really not interested in doing at all. Tell me what things you may enjoy doing and are willing to take responsibility for on this list.

Allow them time to respond without your direction at the beginning. Let them think about it and choose what they would like to be responsible for. Allow your child the opportunity to express what they are naturally drawn toward.

Some of the items on your list your child may be able to do on their own, for others your child may desire to partner with another family member to do.

**Side note:** dishwashers within our homes are very convenient, but, on the other hand, dishwashing the 'traditional' way provides some great opportunities for conversation and connection. This may serve as a healthy family time for you and your child.

Grocery shopping can be a great time to connect and teach responsibility as well. It's a wonderful and practical way to teach children about stewardship and budgeting and there may be unique ways in which you can involve your children in the overall experience.

Note to Parents: Just keep your eyes open to potential opportunities in the day to day operations of your household that may naturally lend themselves to connecting and teachable moments. They surround us!

When this is complete, you may notice that there are still some 'less desirable' items on the list. Reality indicates though, that these still need to be taken care of. Someone has to step up to the plate and assume responsibility. Although some noses may cringe, and some recoil at the thought of some of these items, it is an excellent teaching moment.

**Teachable Moment:**

**Give this some thought:**

How do you think you can turn this into a great teaching moment for your family?

What values can you teach or instill within your children's heart in this moment?

Take some time to think this through prior to your family meeting in the event there are still some items left unattended.

**One possible teaching point:** There are some things that we may not 'like or enjoy doing' but are necessary for our household to function in health. It is with these items that we choose to 'serve' one another because of our love and commitment to the family as a whole.

Ask, what item on this list are you willing to do as an act of service/love for the health of our family? Let them think this through and choose for themselves. Serving the family members out of love and sacrifice is a great value to instill and they can learn to do this through these simple tasks. Looking to the future of their development, this also may have a positive impact long term within their lives, relationships and employment.

Throughout this process, ensure that you are stepping up to the plate and volunteering to carry responsibility as well. Our children need to see us as active participants within the life and health of our family. I'd suggest also, that you take the lead in the less desirable areas, (like stooping and scooping) which gives you the 'right' to ask others to follow your example. The idea is to create a healthy family atmosphere, not get our children to do all the work for us.

When those less desirable elements are cared for you move toward calling for accountability. As you lead into this, affirm again the process to this point.

- Thank them for their insight, ideas, discussion, and willingness to carry responsibility.
- Affirm that their participation in this way will contribute to the overall health of the family.
- Tell them how proud you are of them today.
- Other affirmations:

**Say:**

Now that we have established what needs to be done and who is going to do it, what can we do now to make sure that the decisions we made will be followed through with?

**Facilitate an Accountability Brainstorming Session:**

When several ideas are presented, then move to making a decision about the one you will experiment with first.

You could say, you have mentioned some great ideas, what would you like to try first?

When they have zeroed in on an accountability structure, set a start date and celebrate together.

### **Follow-up Thoughts:**

It would be interesting and informative for you as a parent to know how your child responded to this. In light of this, you could do a family debrief as well to gain this information. You can choose to do it immediately, or at a later date. The idea is to gain an understanding of the impact this has upon their lives.

### **Suggested follow-up questions as you facilitate a debrief:**

(These are suggested questions to get you started, feel free to add, adapt or delete as appropriate to your context.)

- What did you most appreciate/like about this family meeting?
- What did you most appreciate/like about being involved in decision making in this way?
- In what ways did that affect you?
- How did you feel about this approach to making decisions as a family?
- What thoughts do you have about family's meetings of this nature? What stands out to you? How did it make you feel being a part of the decision making process together?
- How do you feel about the decisions YOU have made?
- How do you feel about your place within the family and the responsibility you have?
- What changes would you make the next time we approach decisions in this way as a family?

### **Parental Reflection upon this exercise:**

Involving our children in decision making in this way is a 'Pro-Active Parent Coaching' practice and has multiple benefits for the family as a whole and in preparing our children for greater awareness and responsibility in the future.

I would like you to take some time and consider what specific impact you believe this could have upon your family and children in particular. Feel free to share your observations and thoughts in the comment section below.

Additionally, as you experiment with this family meeting exercise, observe closely what happens within the members of your family at the beginning, throughout and after the meeting has completed.

Lastly, take a few moments and consider the debrief questions from above from your own perspective.

I trust that you experience and enjoy the richness that family meetings can offer as much as others have. It would be great to hear your experiences with this practical exercise and the impact it has had upon your family. Please feel free to share your observations in the comment section below.

Until next time,  
Your friend and pro-active parent coach  
Greg

*\*Gregory and Lynn Bland currently reside in Nova Scotia, Canada and are actively coaching, writing and developing a course to train parents in [Pro-ActiveParentCoaching](#). Additionally they are providing interim pastoring for the [Maritime District of the PAOC](#). For more information check out [Pro-ActiveParentCoaching](#) or write to [greg@pro-activeparentcoaching.com](mailto:greg@pro-activeparentcoaching.com).*

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