

Getting Started

There are four important steps of *Solutions For Families* that will get you started. As you read and participate in these steps, your family will have a great start in laying the foundation of mutual understanding, organization and unity.

1. FAMILY SURVEY

- This is the core of the program and can strengthen your family in powerful ways.
- In the survey each family member responds to statements about your family life.
- After you take the survey and discuss the responses, you'll see how family members really view your family.
- The survey will help you better understand one another. It will show your family strengths, and it will also reveal some things you may want to improve.

2. FAMILY CONTRACT

- This is a contract family members sign indicating their willingness to participate in the *Solutions For Families* program.

3. FAMILY MEETING

- Holding regular family meetings is the best way to be organized as a family.
- Family meetings have three parts: Family Council; Lesson; Activity.
- This is a good time for families to come together and share their feelings, and plan, learn and play.

4. FAMILY GOALS STATEMENT

- A Family Goals Statement is like your family constitution. It's a statement of your family's beliefs and goals.
- The Goals Statement defines your family rules and values.
- With a Family Goals Statement you'll have direction, and you'll feel more like a team working together.

As you read and participate in these four steps, your family will have a great start in laying



Dr. Paula Fellingham's

Solutions FOR FAMILIES

Part of the **TOTAL LIFE EXCELLENCE** program

the foundation of mutual understanding, organization and unity.

You can begin the *Solutions For Families* program by reading the Family Survey Instructions, on the following page, then taking the Family Survey.

FAMILY SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

The Family Survey is designed to help families understand one another's feelings and how each person views the family. When all family members honestly respond to the survey statements and talk about the results with kindness, the survey can be a powerful tool for family growth.

Each one of the twenty-four lessons in *Solutions For Families* relates directly to the statements in the Family Survey--it is the core of the program. For example, lesson one, "Kind Thoughts," corresponds to statement one in the survey: "Our family thinks kind thoughts about one another." Completing the survey as a family before you begin the lessons will give you a basic understanding of how family members feel about the issues addressed in the survey. This will aid in your preparation of the lessons and serve as a guide for your discussions.

There are two very important things to remember when you complete the survey and discuss the results. First, family members need to respond to the statements with complete honesty. Tell how you *really* feel. Second, when your family talks about the statements in the survey, make only positive comments. No family members should feel guilty or challenged because of their honest responses.

Each family member needs his or her own copy of the survey. Additional surveys can be found at the back of the book. Follow these four steps:

STEP 1 Respond to Each Survey Statement Twice

The way you respond is by putting either **1** (almost never) **3** (sometimes) or **5** (almost always) beside each statement.

First, respond by thinking about the way your family is right now. (Actual)

Second, respond by thinking about the way you would like it to be. (Ideal)

STEP 2 Results of Individual Responses

Beside each statement write your actual and ideal response numbers. Total these numbers. You'll see that the statements address six areas of family life: Kindness, Commitment, Communication, Choices, Well-being and Spirituality. Now go to the Results of all Family Members' Responses.

STEP 3 Results of all Family Members' Responses

On the left, write each family member's name.

Write each person's totals in the chart for each of the six areas.

Add all numbers. (Actual and Ideal) Write the *average* number below the totals. You'll get the average number by dividing your *total* by the number of people in your family. Example: If the total number is 50, divide by 5 people

in your family, and the average number is 10.

STEP 4

Graph of Results

Using your *average actual numbers* put a dot on the graph above each of the six areas. Put the dot on the graph's vertical dotted line. Connect the dots. Now put x's across the graph using your *average ideal numbers*. Connect the x's. You have two graphs: the actual way your family is now, and the ideal way you'd like to be.

FAMILY SURVEY

Name _____

Step 1 Choose the number below that you think is the most correct for each statement.

On the left, respond to the statement the way you think your family is now. (Actual)

On the right, respond the way you would like your family to be. (Ideal)

Almost Never

Sometimes

Almost Always

1

3

5

Actual

Ideal

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------|
| _____ | 1. Our family thinks kind thoughts about one another. | _____ |
| _____ | 2. In our family we express love for each other. | _____ |
| _____ | 3. We use a kind tone of voice when we speak. | _____ |
| _____ | 4. We treat one another the way we like to be treated. | _____ |
| _____ | 5. We enjoy doing things together as a family. | _____ |
| _____ | 6. We set family goals together. | _____ |
| _____ | 7. Our family helps one another without being asked. | _____ |
| _____ | 8. We have family traditions. | _____ |
| _____ | 9. We try to understand one another's feelings. | _____ |
| _____ | 10. We speak kindly to one another and try not to criticize. | _____ |
| _____ | 11. We listen to each other. | _____ |

___	12. In our family we can say what we feel.	___
___	13. We take responsibility for our own mistakes.	___
___	14. We all help make the rules in our family.	___
___	15. We try to prevent problems before they occur.	___
___	16. We can talk about things without arguing.	___
___	17. Our family has good health habits. (We eat healthfully, exercise regularly.)	___
___	18. We enjoy learning in our family.	___
___	19. Our family enjoys being with other people.	___
___	20. Our family makes wise financial decisions.	___
___	21. We rely upon God.	___
___	22. Our family prays together.	___
___	23. We worship God as a family.	___
___	24. We share our feelings about God in our family.	___
___	Total	Total ___

AFTER THE FAMILY SURVEY

Completing the Family Survey is an important first step in the *Solutions For Families* program. This survey can become a valuable tool for your family as you discuss your responses to the survey.

Family members need to understand that it is perfectly all right to have different responses. There are no “right” or “wrong” responses. Family members’ numbers will often be different because even people in the same family have different beliefs and perceptions. Different is not wrong. It is only different.

Take some time now to discuss your responses. Talk about how the statements made you feel. Remember to make only positive comments during your family discussion.

If you’ve chosen to complete the graphs, you should have two graphs. One line shows where you are now as a family (actual). The other line shows where you’d like to be (ideal).

As a family, look at your graphs. Based on your results, talk about each of these questions:

1. How do we feel about the kindness we show to one another?
2. How well do we commit our time to each other and to the family?
3. How well do we communicate in our family?
4. How do we feel about the choices we make?
5. How is our family's physical, mental, social and financial well-being?
6. How is our spirituality?

Look at your graphs again. Talk about where you are today and where you want to be. Decide which areas you want to work on first, then complete the Family Goals below.

FAMILY GOALS

Based on your results from the Family Survey, list the goals your family wants to reach.

GOAL #1 _____

GOAL #2 _____

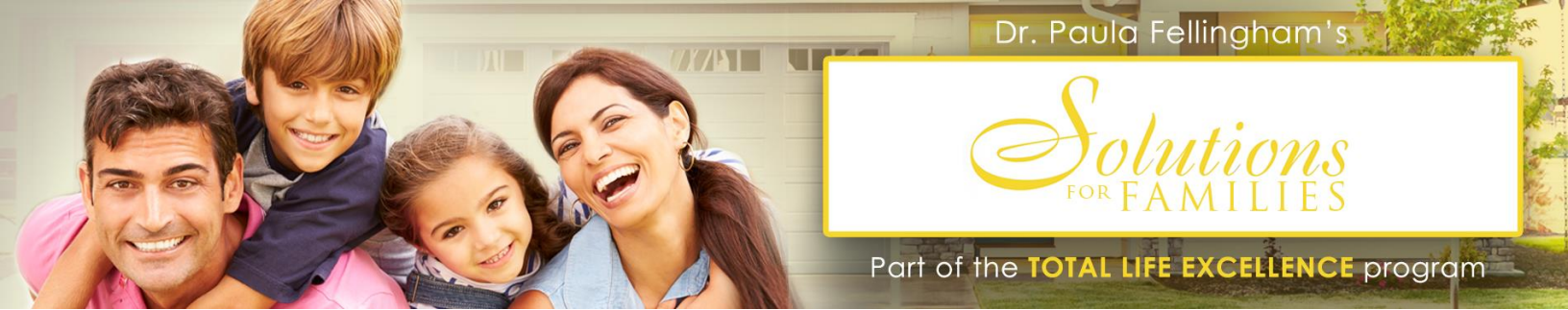
GOAL #3 _____

FAMILY CONTRACT

The FAMILY CONTRACT is on the following page. When you sign this contract, you are committing your heart and your time to finding solutions that can powerfully strengthen your family. You are pledging your willingness to participate in the *Solutions For Families* lessons and activities.

A concept, activity, discussion and assignment are explained in each of the twenty-four lessons. It is best to approach the lessons with open minds; be willing to learn and grow together. With this positive attitude you'll enjoy finding solutions for your family.

Be confident in the knowledge that the investment of your time strengthening your family will reap long-term rewards of joy in a loving home.



FAMILY CONTRACT

The _____ Family

(Write your name here)

wants to find solutions which will strengthen our family. We commit to spending time together participating in the program *Solutions For Families.*

We will meet together and learn the concepts in the lessons. Our family will participate in the discussions, activities and assignments.

As we apply these lessons, we can experience greater happiness and increased love and peace in our home.

Family Members

FAMILY MEETING

Building a successful family is like building a home. Both need a plan. A successful family based on unity and love takes careful planning, but it's worth every moment.

The best way to be organized as a family is to hold weekly family meetings. By doing this, families enjoy a special closeness and stability. Choosing to spend time with your family sends a message more powerful than words. Memories made together during this time will bond and sustain your family through the years.

The family meeting should be an important part of every family's weekly schedule. The family meeting can have three parts. These are suggestions only; your weekly meeting can be anything your family wants it to be.

Parts of the Family Meeting:

- **Family Council**
- **Lesson**
- **Activity**

1. Family Council

The Family Council is a time to do three things:
Schedule activities, talk about family matters, and plan the next family meeting.

A. Schedule activities.

Coordinating schedules and planning family activities needs to be done weekly. When everyone is present (with calendars or note paper) discuss each day of the week. Try to plan a daily schedule that allows your family to eat at least one meal together each day...even if meal time is a little later or earlier than is most convenient for every person. Sometimes individual schedules are adjusted for the good of the family.

Talk about upcoming events. Decide when family members can support one another by attending their activities. Then plan one family activity. Remember to talk about all the details of the activity. This will include the date, time, meeting place, money and food needed, special clothes to be worn, etc. When conflicts arise, this family activity has highest priority.

B. Talk about family matters.

Discuss household chores, family problems, and anything a family member wants to talk about.

A family discussion is the core of the family council. This is a valuable opportunity each week to gather around and share feelings about the family. Anything that needs to be discussed can be shared at this time. It is very important that all family members speak only positively, and allow the person talking to share his feelings in an atmosphere of empathy and caring. This is a time to voice concerns and suggestions for the good of the family.

C. Plan next week's family meeting.

To make sure that your next family meeting will be a success and each family member will be involved, talk about who will give the lesson, who will help with the activity, and who will prepare the treats.

2. Lesson

The weekly family meeting is an excellent time to teach a lesson. This can be a discussion on correct behavior, good manners, or one of the important moral values which help shape children's characters. The opportunity to meet together regularly as a family to learn "life lessons" is priceless. Parents, this is your stewardship. Unless you teach your children, how will they learn the principles and values you want them to know?

Decide as parents in advance what should be taught each week. A sample lesson on gratitude is included at the end of this section.

3. Activity

The activity is an important part of the family meeting. Families need to have fun together! The activity should be something that everyone enjoys. It could be as simple as a family walk in the neighborhood, or playing a board game. The activity could be watching a movie as a family, going to a sporting event, or doing a service for a friend or neighbor. The most important thing is that the family is all together, enjoying themselves.

As a family, read the following information about a weekly meeting. Then hold a family meeting using as many of the suggestions as possible. Don't be discouraged if your meetings aren't perfect--no family's meetings are. Do your best and congratulate yourselves on participating in an activity that will bring your family closer together.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FAMILY MEETING

1. Choose a special time each week that you set aside just for the family.
2. Cut out all distractions during that time — no TV, no homework, no phone.
3. Let family members know that this is the family's time for each other.
4. Allow family members to take turns being responsible for parts of the meeting.
Family members will feel more involved and will learn more if they participate in the meeting. Children can prepare a poem, story, song, part of the lesson, refreshments or plan the activity. You may want to rotate the responsibilities of the weekly meeting to involve the entire family.
5. Adapt the lessons and activities to the needs of your family.
Every family has different strengths and weaknesses. Think about lessons your family needs and activities your family will enjoy. Then plan lessons and activities to meet those needs.
6. Plan fun family activities.
Time together should be enjoyable. Playing games, cooking, or giving service are some suggestions for weekly meeting activities. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.
7. Keep the tone of the meeting positive.
This is a time when each family member should feel loved and accepted. Everyone should be able to speak without being criticized. It can be a time for setting family goals and solving family problems. It should always be a time to enjoy each other. It is most important to be positive and patient. The growth of a child and a family is a gradual process--one day, one act of love at a time. Your family can be built on love and unity with the help of a weekly family meeting.

FAMILY MEETING

SAMPLE AGENDA

Welcome

Song/Poem

Family Council

1. Discuss and schedule the week's activities.
2. Discuss family matters: household chores, family problems, and anything a family member wants to talk about with the family.
3. Plan next week's family meeting.

Lesson

Activity

Treats

SAMPLE FAMILY MEETING LESSON

GRATITUDE

Today we're going to talk about gratitude. Gratitude is being thankful for who you are and for things you have.

To begin, let's each name some of the things for which we're grateful.

(The person giving the lesson should now call on one family member at a time, and ask them to name two things they're grateful for. Some answers might be, "I'm grateful for our house, for our family, for my eyes to see, for my ears to hear, for our dog, our food, Grandma, my teacher, my friends, etc.)

A man named Dale Carnegie once said, "Happiness doesn't depend on outward conditions. It depends on inner conditions. It isn't what we have or who we are, or what we are doing that makes us happy or unhappy. It's what we *think* about it. For example, two people may be in the same place, doing the same thing, and yet one may be miserable and the other happy. Why? Because of a different mental attitude."

Can we be happier if we're grateful for what we have, instead of thinking about what we don't have? How can we acquire an attitude of gratitude?

When we wake up in the morning, we can choose to think thoughts of gratitude or of ingratitude. If we have an attitude of gratitude, instead of thinking about the unpleasant things we have to do that day we'll think of ways to be grateful. We'll think thoughts like, "I'm glad I *can* get out of bed and walk. I'm grateful that I have food for breakfast, and that I can see this beautiful day. I'm glad I have a place to go today where people need me."

Do thoughts like those help people be happy? Would other people enjoy being around us because of our good attitude?

I'd like to share with you a poem about gratitude. It's called "The World Is Mine."

Today upon a bus, I saw a lovely maid with golden hair
I envied her - she seemed so gay - and I wished I were as fair
When suddenly she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the aisle
She had one foot and wore a crutch, but as she passed, a smile
Oh God, forgive me when I whine
I have two feet - the world is mine!
And then I stopped to buy some sweets
The lad who sold them was so kind

I talked with him - he said to me
“It’s nice to take with folks like you
You see,” he said, “I’m blind.”
Oh God, forgive me when I whine
I have two eyes - the world is mine!

Then walking down the street
I saw a child with eyes of blue
He stood and watched the others play
It seemed he knew not what to do
I stopped for a moment, then I said
“Why don’t you join the others, dear?”
He looked ahead without a word
And then I knew he could not hear
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine
I have two ears - the world is mine!

With feet to take me where I’d go
With eyes to see the sunset’s glow
With ears to hear what I would know
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine
I’m blessed indeed! The world is mine!

As a family, let’s try to be more grateful each day for who we are and for all that we have.
Let’s each try to keep an attitude of gratitude. I want you to know that I love and appreciate each one of you, and that I’ll do my best to have more gratitude.

FAMILY GOALS STATEMENT

A Family Goals Statement is like a family constitution. It is a statement of your beliefs and your goals as a family. It is the definition of the course you want your family to take. Once you have that sense of direction, you can set your long and short-term goals. You have the vision and values that direct your lives.

Like all families, your family needs to have a clear understanding of where you are going. When you follow a plan, each day will be in harmony with the vision you have of your lives. The steps you take will be in the right direction--toward your personal and family goals.

Define your goals. As a family decide together what you really want to accomplish. If you don't define your goals, you can get caught up in the "busyness" of life and forget the things which really matter most to you. A great way to start is to create a Family Goals Statement.

Activity

Create a Family Goals Statement. It is important that all family members participate. Everyone should think of things they would like to include.

Example only:

"The _____ Family goal is to have each family member be happy. We will do this by being kind, obeying family rules, supporting one another and serving one another.

In all of our thoughts, words, and actions, we will try to be kind.

We will obey our family rules. Our rules are: _____

Our family will support each other in our interests and talents by attending one another's activities. We will give service to one another and our neighbors. And we will always love each other."

.....

Someone in your family might say, "Let's be cheerful" or , "Let's treat each other the way we want to be treated." Anything which the family agrees is a good goal or belief can be added.

Once everyone agrees on the behaviors that are important to your family, write them down. It is your Goals Statement. Put it up somewhere in your home where it can be easily seen.

Discussion

Discuss how a Family Goals Statement can bring greater family happiness. Some answers might be, "Having a Goals Statement in our home will help us act better. Our goals will be on the

wall where we can read them often.” Or, “With a Family Goals Statement, we’ll feel more like a team working together toward family happiness.

Assignment

Read your Family Goals Statement regularly. An ideal time to do this is at the beginning of your weekly family meeting, but any time is fine. Talk about how closely your actions match the goals you decided on as a family. Highlight areas of improvement and discuss as a family what is hindering progress.



Solutions
FOR FAMILIES

Part of the **TOTAL LIFE EXCELLENCE** program