

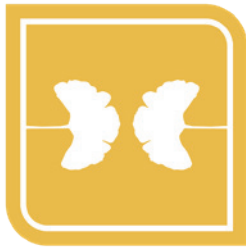


## Session 3

# Sharing Power—Even When It’s Challenging

## Handout Guide

Handout	Quantity Needed
<b>Family Handout 3.1</b> Share Power: Some Key Ideas	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.2</b> From Power Struggles to Power Sharing	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.3a</b> Sharing Power: Which Approaches Fit Your Family?	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.3b</b> Sharing Power: Which Approaches Fit Your Family? (Example)	Sample for facilitator
<b>Family Handout 3.4</b> How Youth and Parenting Adults Contribute to Shared Decision Making	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.5a</b> At-Home Activities Guide	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.5b</b> POST IT: A Guide for Your Week	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.5c</b> TRY IT: Share Power through a Regular Family Meeting	1 per family
<b>Family Handout 3.5d</b> TRY IT: Practice Negotiating Together	1 per family



SHARE POWER

## Some Key Ideas

“Share power” doesn’t mean “give up” power. When we share power in our family, we respond to this unspoken request:

**“Treat me with respect and give me a say.”**

**57%**  
of US parents believe sharing power is strong in their family.

### Why Is It Important for Families to Share Power?

Sharing power in families helps **parenting adults** . . .

- Deepen their relationships with their kids.
- Learn to trust their kids.

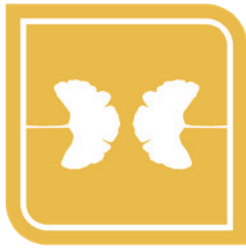
Sharing power in families helps **young people** . . .

- Become more responsible and motivated.
- Adjust to school transitions.
- Communicate, negotiate, and solve problems.
- Avoid risky behaviors and make better decisions.
- Be prepared to form relationships throughout life.

### Sharing Power Is a Common Source of Conflict in Families

Sharing power leads to more give-and-take in relationships. But it can also lead to conflicts. Parenting adults may have different expectations than young people about when, where, and how to share power and give young people a voice.

Most families have more conflicts over power and independence during the middle-school years. The conflicts tend to even out or decline through high school.



# Questions to Ask:

How can you turn power struggles into power sharing?

Ask yourself these questions:

## THE MAIN POINT:

Power struggles are not really a “behavior issue.” They are a relationship issue. Learning to “share power” is key to a strong parent-child relationship.

When kids approach the teen years, everything seems to become a power struggle! Why? The basic answer is that they’re growing up:

- Their brains are changing. They’re starting to think differently.
- They’re trying to figure out who they are.
- They are shifting from mostly depending on others for everything toward having more responsibility and self-control.

Underneath all these changes, power struggles are signs that your relationship is changing. That’s a normal part of growing up. In the long run, it’s good. ***But it’s hard right now!***

- 1. What will help you slow down and cool down?** Take deep breath. Don’t make it worse by escalating.
- 2. What’s behind the power struggle?** Is it an important difference of opinion? Is something major at stake (such as safety)? Are you tired, stressed, or upset about something else?
- 3. Are they right this time?** Are you holding on too tightly? Have they matured and can take on more responsibility? It may be time to give more responsibility.
- 4. What’s the best way to share power in this instance?** Should you listen carefully, and then decide yourself? Should you offer choices? Should you negotiate a win-win? Should you let the child make the decision?
- 5. Do you need to stay firm this time?** You can listen, explain, and empathize. Then make tough decisions and maintain the needed expectations and consequences.
- 6. When can you say yes?** Saying yes when you can makes it easier to say no when you need to.
- 7. How will you keep expressing care?** You love your kids, even when you’re mad at them. They are more likely to accept decisions if they know you really listen to them and want the best for them.
- 8. What’s the big picture?** Your ultimate goal is to help your child learn and grow, including learning to negotiate and make good decisions. Sometimes we may need to renegotiate and let go so our kids can learn, even though they will make mistakes.



# Which Approaches Fit Your Family?

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pick one area of family life where you make decisions that affect everyone in your family. (You identified some during the session.)
2. Decide together which statement in the row labeled "The Parenting Adult's Approach" best fits how a decision about this topic is usually made in your family. Write the topic in the blank space below the statement.
3. Then decide together if you'd like that decision to be made a different way (represented by a different statement in the row). If so, draw an arrow to show how you want to move that topic to try something new.
4. Repeat the exercise with other topics as much as you have time. Do you see any patterns?

THE PARENTING ADULT'S APPROACH						
"This is the decision, because I said so."	"This is why I made the decision that I made."	"What you think will help me decide."	"Here are three choices. Which one should we do?"	"Let's decide this together."	"Let me help you, but it's your decision."	"It's your choice. I'll stay out of it."
Parenting adult has all the power	Different ways to share power between youth and parenting adult				Youth has all the power	



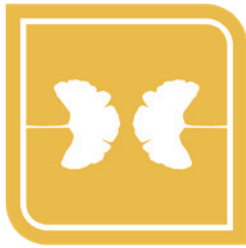
EXAMPLE:

# What Approaches Fit Your Family?

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pick one area of family life where you make decisions that affect everyone in your family. (You identified some during the session.)
2. Decide together which statement in the row labeled "The Parenting Adult's Approach" best fits how a decision about this topic is usually made in your family. Write the topic in the blank space below the statement.
3. Then decide together if you'd like that decision to be made a different way (represented by a different statement in the row). If so, draw an arrow to show how you want to move that topic to try something new.
4. Repeat the exercise with other topics as much as you have time. Do you see any patterns?

THE PARENTING ADULTS APPROACH						
"This is the decision, because I said so."	"This is why I made the decision that I made."	"What you think will help me decide."	"Here are three choices. Which one should we do?"	"Let's decide this together."	"Let me help you, but it's your decision."	"It's your choice. I'll stay out of it."
What we eat for dinner each night	Choosing who family members spend time with socially	Where we should go for a weekend vacation	Which chores a young person should do	Choosing how to practice faith or spirituality	Setting bedtime/curfew	What we wear to school/work
Parenting adult has all the power	Different ways to share power between youth and parenting adult				Youth has all the power	



How Youth and Parenting Adults

# Contribute to Shared Decision Making

Shared decision making is sometimes hard for some families. Here are some ways to do it—and some of the potential benefits.

## How to Share Power in Decision Making

### Parenting Adults Can...

- Ask your child for their opinion or ideas.
- Ask your child for information to help you make a better decision.
- Give your child options to choose from. Explain pros and cons.
- Suggest ideas and share information.
- Explain why you made your decision. Make sure your child understands.
- Ask your child what they would do if they could decide. If they give a good, responsible answer, then say, “Do that!”

### Youth Can...

- Ask your parenting adult for advice or information.
- Express your opinions.
- Suggest ideas and share information.
- Think of problems that could come up from different choices.
- Tell your parenting adult when you make a decision they’re interested in.
- Ask questions about a decision your parenting adult makes—not to argue, but to understand better.

### The Benefits of Sharing Power in Decision Making

What can young people learn when they make decisions together with their parenting adults? Here are some skills that researchers have found:

- How to take different factors into account
- How to get more information when they need it
- How to think through options or weigh pros and cons
- How to think about consequences of choices
- How to negotiate and influence decisions

## What Does It Look Like to Share Power?

Some examples of areas in which families may share power include:

- What to eat for meals; sharing responsibilities such as grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning up; dietary choices such as being vegetarian
- Dividing up chores around the home; choosing when chores should be completed
- Choosing what the family will do for a fun activity or vacation; choosing what individuals will do for hobbies and/or co-curricular activities
- Scheduling a regular family meeting to problem-solve any challenges as a family
- Hairstyles, clothing, makeup/grooming, or other aspects of personal appearance
- Choosing who family members spend time with socially
- Choosing how to practice faith or spirituality
- Health-related decisions, including diet/nutrition, exercise, and visiting the doctor
- Budgeting and spending money
- Setting a bedtime or curfew

## Ways to Make Decisions

There is no one “correct” way to make decisions. Instead, consider who should be involved in different decision. Who will be affected the most? Who knows a lot about the issue being considered?

Some decision-making options may include:

- A youth makes a decision alone
- A youth makes a decision alone with input from parenting adults or siblings
- A youth and parenting adult make a decision together
- A parenting adult makes a decision alone
- A parenting adult makes a decision alone after consulting youth or other parenting adults
- Multiple siblings make a decision together
- Multiple parenting adults/adult family members make a decision together
- All family members make a decision together



SHARE POWER

# At Home Activities

## OVERVIEW: What Will Our Family Do?

If You Have:	Materials	Activity Name	Description	When Will Your Family Do This?
1 minute	Family Handout 3.5b	Post It: A Guide for Your Week	Post this guide somewhere all family members will see it. The refrigerator is a great spot!	
5 minutes	Family Handout 3.5b	Talk About It	Choose one question to discuss any time you have down time - in the car, waiting in line, over a meal. Put these questions on a sheet of paper in your home - each family member can write their answers to them throughout the week.	
30 minutes	Handout 3.5c	Try It: Share Power Through a Regular Family Meeting	Get together to answer seven questions about what kind of family meeting will work for you. When you're done, you'll have a plan for a regular family meeting that shares power and brings your family closer together.	
30 minutes	Handout 3.5d	Try It: Practice Negotiating Together	This activity is a step-by-step process for negotiating through conflicts or problems. Practice it on a small dispute and determine how you might use it for bigger challenges.	
10 minutes	Internet-enabled device	Online Exploration	Visit <a href="http://www.keepconnected.info">www.keepconnected.info</a> to explore extra resources on family relationships.	



**POST IT**

# A Guide For Your Week

*Display this page where you will notice it through the week (such as on a refrigerator).*

## Think about it

*Key ideas to remember*

**SHARE POWER:** Treat each other **with respect and give each other a say.**

- **Sharing power can be a hard** in family relationships. But it's important, particularly during the teen years.
- We **share power in different ways** for different issues.
- You can **turn power struggles into power sharing.**

## Talk about it

*Discussion starters*

- Think of a time when someone shared power with you by treating you with respect or giving you a say. What did they do? How did it affect you?
- Look at each area of sharing power: Be respectful; include each other; collaborate; let others lead. When has your family done some of these things well? Which are particularly hard for your family?
- How is your family similar to previous generations of your family when it comes to sharing power? How is it different? Share stories and examples.
- What is one area of sharing power that you'd most like to talk about or work on in your family?

## Try it

*Tips for families*

- Include each other in thinking about decisions, even when parenting adults have to make the final call.
- When you disagree, take time to understand each other's point of view.
- For parents: Let young people make decisions about activities you do together and what you talk about. Don't jump in too fast when they don't make quick decisions or think of things to talk about.



Visit [www.KeepConnected.info](http://www.KeepConnected.info)

Find ideas, quizzes, activities, discussion starters, and more to strengthen family relationships.



TRY IT

# Share Power Through a Regular Family Meeting

To practice sharing power, get together as a family to set up a regular family meeting. Use this worksheet to figure out what you want to do to get started. (You can change it later, if needed.)

This worksheet includes seven questions. For each, there is information to help you think about what will work for your family. Then there is space to write your family's plan.

## Why Have Family Meetings?

Family meetings can help your family:

- Stay connected & have fun.
- Practice sharing power.
- Plan & coordinate.
- Solve problems together.
- Reduce stress & conflict.

### 1. Why do you want to have family meetings?

Families have meetings for different reasons.

Here are some of them:

- Connect and enjoy time together
- Coordinate activities, schedules, homework, chores
- Honor their culture, heritage, or spiritual practices
- Learn together (and from each other)
- Plan for the future, such as holidays
- Solve problems together

Our top three reasons for having a family meeting right now are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### 2. Who will participate?

Family meetings work best when **everyone in your household** is invited to participate. (Even young children like to be included.)

Most families find that it works best **not to force people to come**. Instead, work to make the meetings enjoyable so everyone wants to participate.

Who will be invited?

- 
- 
- 
- 

### 3. When, where, and how often will you meet?

- Family meetings should reduce stress. Most families start by trying to **meet weekly** so it becomes a habit.
- Find a time that works for everyone. If you can just get together for 10 minutes, start with that.
- Meet in an **enjoyable place**.

When:

Where:

How often:



## TRY IT

### 4. What style of meeting works for your family?

Does your family work best with a clear structure and specific rules? Or is it better to be more flexible and relaxed? (If things always feel chaotic, it can help to have a clear plan.)

Our family will work best if meetings (pick one):

- Have clear rules and plan
- Are informal, relaxed

### 5. What will you do during your meetings?

Some things families like to do in their meetings include:

- Connect: Every meeting should begin and end with something meaningful and/or fun. This can include the “Highs and Lows” activity, a religious or cultural ritual, or a Talk About It question from the at-home activities.
- Learn: For example, do Keep Connected take-home activities or other activities from [www.keepconnected.info](http://www.keepconnected.info).
- Coordinate: Sync up schedules, chores, and activities.
- Plan: Think about and plan upcoming activities, birthdays, or vacations.
- Solve problems: Everyone helps solve a problem the family faces together.

Our family meetings will include the following topics (start with 2-3 things, then add if you like):

- Connect & celebrate
- Religious or cultural practice
- Coordinate schedules
- Plan upcoming activities
- Learn together
- Solve problems
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



## TRY IT

### 6. How will you share power in your meetings?

Here are examples of how to practice each part of sharing power in your family meetings:

- **Be respectful:** Give everyone a chance to talk. Pay attention when they are talking. Take their concerns and opinions seriously.
- **Include me:** Have everyone be part of decisions that affect them.
- **Collaborate:** Instead of blaming each other, work together to solve problems.
- **Let me lead:** Give each person a chance to make decisions and take the lead during meetings. This might include rotating who leads each meeting.

What will your family do?

To be respectful?

To include everyone?

To collaborate?

To let everyone lead?

### 7. How will you keep track of what you do and decide?

Decide how your family will do the following. Keep track of who is responsible for each action.

1. **Keep track:** Write down the decisions you made so you can check them later. Some families post decisions on their refrigerator as a reminder.
2. **Sync calendars:** Talk about what's on everyone's agenda. Make sure the things you agree to are on calendars.
3. **Set future topics:** Some families post a sheet labeled "Agenda" on the refrigerator. Any family member can add topics when they think of them.

**Keep track:**

How?

Who?

**Sync schedules:**

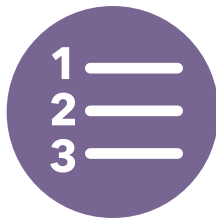
How?

Who?

**Set future topics:**

How?

Who?



TRY IT

Practice Negotiating Together

# A Step-by-Step Process

For each person to share power in families, you need work through disagreements. This activity lets you practice a simple negotiation process. Remember: The goal isn't to get "your way." The goal is to find a solution that meets everyone's needs and keeps your relationships strong.

1. **Pick a small and specific area of conflict** that affects everyone in your family. Describe it without blaming anyone. For example, "Our kitchen and living room always have stuff piled around" is better than "Andy never picks up his junk on the living room floor."
2. **Find a time and place when everyone can focus.**
3. **Describe the issue**, as you understand it. Ask others to clarify it from their perspective. Work together to understand the problem that everyone agrees is accurate without blaming anyone.
4. **Brainstorm what might be contributing to the problem.** These can include things people do, things about the circumstances, and any other issues.
5. **Ask people each to think of ways they might be contributing to the problem.** Consider potential ways everyone might be contributing, not just one person.
6. Agree on a **shared and specific goal** that everyone really cares about and benefits from.
7. **Brainstorm a bunch of ways your family could tackle that problem**, both individually and as a group.
8. **Evaluate your ideas.** Which ones would help the most? Put them together. Refine them. Think of the pros and cons. Focus on ideas that everyone believes could work.
9. **Pick one or two things you'll do.** Talk about how you're going to check in on how it's going. Decide what you'll do if everyone doesn't follow through.
10. After a few days, **check in** to see how it's going. Adjust, if needed. You can even go back to your longer list of ideas to try something else. If you're still stuck, brainstorm again to come up with more ideas.
11. Once you've tried (and refined) these steps for smaller challenges, your family will be ready to try this process on other, **bigger challenges you face.**