

# Our Family Constitution

- ♥ Think about others
- ♥ Keep your promises
- ♥ Share
- ♥ Say I love you
- ♥ Listen to each other
- ♥ Do your best
- ♥ Say please, thank-you and excuse me
- ♥ Tell the truth
- ♥ Laugh at yourself
- ♥ Hug often
- ♥ Use kind words
- ♥ Help each other
- ♥ Move and play every day
- ♥ Try new things
- ♥ Be grateful
- ♥ Dream big
- ♥ Respect one another
- ♥ Laugh out loud



# Developing a Family Constitution

In the same manner a Countries Constitution assists its governance regarding rules, processes, governing, guiding, freedom and responsibilities, so to the Family Constitution assists families with conflict resolution relating to rules, disputes, law & grace, expectations, chores and responsibilities and things of this nature.

A Countries Constitution remains the ultimate yardstick regarding dealing with challenges that are being faced. So to the Family Constitution would be the yardstick of the "law" of how a family would work and how it's members would behave. In order to create such a document, all the family members would have to come together to discuss the contents and structure of their constitution, this creates 'buy-in' and responsibility. It should be a fun time and with younger children could be a mini party with snacks, treats and juice.

The constitution will act as a mediator for a new Blended Family. It will enforce the rules agreed upon by all parties without unnecessary conflict. This assists step parents in dealing with non-biological children so as to see all being done in the fairness of the constitutions rules, guidelines and consequences.

When it comes to Blended Families a Family Constitution can make all the difference. The reason being is that we know have "different rivers flowing into one lake", an example being a child that was the eldest in one family now may become the youngest, children may have to share bedrooms for the first time. If it's been a long time with only the parent and child, the child may now see the new stepparent as a threat or butting in or even stealing their biological parent's time.

If research confirms that Blended Families take between 5-7 years to stabilise, then one needs to start with a solid foundation, clear understanding and as much as possible set in place to begin what may be a challenging journey.

## **The process :**

All the members of the family are to gather together. You will need something to capture the information your constitution will contain, be it on paper or electronically on a laptop or device. Recommended is a large sheet of paper A3 and seated at the dinner table.

Explain in age appropriate language the purpose of what is about to happen and why there is a need for a constitution.

Discuss what the family sees as priorities and develop a plan to pursue them together. Things like : - having dinner together each night, daddy date nights for sons & daughters (special moments creating lasting memories). Trips, holidays and the importantly date nights with your partner. Faith and church involvement, service to your community. Etc.

## Develop a “family value system”

- What will our families values & rules be?
- How will we honour one another?
- What will we never do?
- How will we resolve conflict?
- What will be our focus as a family?
- What will be the consequences if the rules are broken?
- What is our “emergency” plan?

List your chores and who will do what. What responsibilities will each member have (making your own bed, folding washing, cleaning up after meals...) and what if they break the rules (agree to a particular consequence e.g. no mobile phone for a day, no TV or using their electronic devices, cleaning the car ....)

Your constitution and its content will be unique to your family (this is only a brief guide/outline to get you started).

Once everything is written down and agreed upon get every member to write their name, sign or place a finger print using a stamp pad on the constitution. Then laminate, frame or cover it for protection ... or being tampered with.

Now if stepson does not make his bed on Saturday morning by 9am as outlined in your constitution, then stepdad does not have to fight or yell at him but rather takes him to the constitution and shows him the rule and the consequences he has agreed to by signing his name. Less conflict and things can be achieved in a far more amicable way.

### ***Here's an example of a “Family Constitution” :***

1. We recognize that God loves us and will meet all our needs through His riches in glory.
2. We purpose to honour God, His creation and one another.
3. We agree to resolve any angry conflicts between ourselves each day before the sun sets.
4. We resolve this day to lovingly and meaningfully touch each other as needed on a daily basis, with hugs, "high 5's" and the like.
5. We understand the value of spending meaningful time together. Therefore, we agree to schedule regular monthly activities that each family member can enthusiastically support.
6. We recognize that all our money belongs to the Lord, and we purpose to seek His will and wisdom regarding the earning, giving, saving, and any other use of His funds.
7. We further recognize that God has created each person as a unique individual with differing strengths and personality characteristics. Therefore, we will endeavour to discover these differences and learn to accept and praise them.

8. We each recognize the great importance of daily meaningful communication between one another. Therefore, we purpose to spend the necessary time each day, wherever possible, to carefully listen to each other and to express our deepest thoughts and needs.

9. We resolve to care for one another in a tender and affectionate manner.

10. We agree to believe the best in each other and to trust the words and actions of one another as honest. If this trust is broken at any time, we all agree to restore the trust by confessing the untruths, by seeking forgiveness, and by making any necessary restitution.