

Creating a Family Charter

The Family Charter is an agreement we make to act in ways that help us to feel the way we want to feel in our home. Everyone has a voice in creating a Charter and everyone has a responsibility to uphold it.

Getting Started

Planning:

- Find a time when everyone is feeling calm, focused, and ready to work together.
- Use a comfortable area like the living room or the dinner table.

Materials:

- Construction paper or blank sheets of paper, and colored pencils or markers or computer.



Step 1: How do we want to feel in our family?

- Ask everyone to think about how they would like to feel at home.
- Ask everyone to write down 5-8 feelings they want to have at home more often.
- Combine all the feeling words on one master list.
- Discuss each word and notice which feeling words have similar meanings. For example, if you have both "appreciated" and "valued" on the list, can you choose just one?
- Narrow the list down to the top 5 emotions you want to feel more often, and write them down a new piece of paper.

Step 2: What can we do in order to have those feelings?

- For each word, discuss one or two specific, observable behavior(s) that each family member would need to exhibit in order to have the feeling as often as possible.
- For example, 'being nice' is not a real behavior. Smiling or saying 'good morning' to each other are behaviors that everyone can see.

Putting it all together!

- Now it's time to pull all the pieces together and create your own living document.
- Be creative! Use your family's talent and have fun together.
- There are no limits: it can be big or small, colorful, or filled with drawings. What's most important is that you have a final document that includes the top 5 feelings, and the specific and observable behaviors that promote the feelings
- Once the Family Charter is complete, everyone must sign it! Everyone's voice matters!
- Display your Charter prominently in your home so everyone can keep these feelings and behaviors in mind throughout the day.

Keeping the Family Charter Alive

- Schedule weekly or monthly family meetings to review the Charter. What's working? What's not?
- Revise the Family Charter as needed. It should be a living agreement.
- Have each family member set a daily or weekly goal related to part of the Charter that he or she finds the most challenging to honor.
- Be creative - post weekly quotes, send out family emails, perform spontaneous acts to demonstrate the feelings in the Charter and show appreciation for your family members.
- Celebrate your accomplishments!