



Facilitation Tips & Tricks



So, you've decided to facilitate a Community Dinner! Facilitating can be a bit intimidating at first, but these tips and tricks you'll find that facilitating is as easy as pie.

The Facilitator directs the events for the evening and should be somewhat comfortable presenting information and leading group conversations. You will also be involved in helping families get started with their family activities and making them feel welcome, building rapport and trust with the families present. Engaging in conversation and connecting with the families is key to making the facilitated discussion portion of the evening successful.

After dinner, your role as the Facilitator is to lead a discussion and provide an opportunity for families to talk about challenges and solutions to having family dinners - to benefit from one another's real-life experiences. Your goal is to set the stage for a dialogue about family dinner: invite the sharing of what is working well, followed by challenges, and then solutions. Draw people out when they have something to say and try to get everyone involved and contributing.

TIP: We have found it super helpful to use a large whiteboard or easel with paper to document participants' responses throughout the discussion.

Parent Discussion Outline

1. Why family dinner is important to me
2. A bit of research
3. What is working well for their family dinners
4. Gathering challenges
5. Good ideas to overcome challenges
6. Ideas from Family Dinner Project
7. Family Dinner Project Programs that can help
 - A) Dinner Tonight
 - B) Food, Fun and Conversation (4 weeks to better family dinners)
 - C) Newsletter



“What this means to me” (the presenter)

Begin by sharing how you got started with family dinners and how that has affected your life or why it interests you.

- What really inspired you?
- What keeps you invested?
- Why do you think it's so important for families to commit to sharing dinners together?

What is working well

During this part of the discussion you are trying to get a sense of what is working well with families' dinners and encourage them to share as part of the group discussion. Allowing the families to start with the positive will

make it easier to have them participate and share their challenges as well. It is important for them to recognize the things they are getting right to help address some of their challenges. Be sure to document their comments!

Challenges

This is an opportunity to compile real life challenges, and help parents see that they are not alone in their struggles.

Facilitator Question:



So between the research and our own personal motivations, we have a lot of good reasons to make family dinners happen more often. But as we all know, there are lots of things that can get in the way. What gets in the way of family dinner at your house? What do you find most challenges your ability to get to the table together?"

Process:

Ask for comments from the group. Make a list of all the main challenges that arise.

Possible Conversation Sparks:

- I can't get my two-year-old to sit at the table with us.
- My kids fight when they are together for more than five minutes.
- Our schedules are too full; we can never find the time.
- I never have the time to get dinner together.
- I hate cooking!
- My kids refuse to eat the same food I want to eat.





Solutions- Parents as Experts:

For every challenge a family in your community faces, chances are another family in that community has faced and overcome something similar. Gather good ideas from people that will help with one or two challenges. You might share some ideas from other parents you have worked with or from the TFDP website.

Facilitator Question:



We have resources within this group to build a list of ideas to deal most challenges we have named. We don't always know the resources are sitting next to us. By sharing our ideas, we begin to see the abundance that is all around us in our community, a resource we can continue to utilize long after this dinner ends. So let's look at the challenges on the list and if you have run into a challenge and found a successful way of dealing with it, share the idea and let's gather as many good ideas as we can in the next 15 minutes."

Ideas from FDP:

Take a look at the FAQ portion of our website and encourage families to check out The Family Dinner Project's other free online programs - Dinner Tonight

and Food, Fun and Conversation - as well as our blog, for tips on overcoming all sorts of challenges to family dinner.

Closing Comments:

After dessert, before everyone leaves for the night, remind them of Family Dinner Project resources.

Briefly review, and give families a copy of a Dinner Tonight card

