

ReadiKids®

THE FAMILY COUNCIL

PARENT GUIDE

Turning everyday life into practice for adulthood.

Based on the Book
Raising Children Capable of Leaving Home

by Frank Fornaca & William Hampton



Helping Parents Teach Fundamental Life Skills

- ✓ Build **Confidence & Responsibility**
- ✓ Improve **Communication**
- ✓ Prepare **Kids for Adulthood**

Guide for Family Meetings and Teaching Life Skills

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Welcome, Parents

When we talk about parents, we're including grandparents, single parents, life partners, and guardians. Are we missing anyone? You get the idea. There's a Hawaiian word for family, Ohana. It means a family bound by love, responsibility, and shared roots - whether those ties are biological, adoptive, or chosen. You gotta a kid you care about? We're talking to you.

Welcome to the ReadiKids Family Council Starter Pack! This Parent Guide is designed to help you navigate the journey of running weekly Family Council meetings. You'll find insights into our philosophy and practical steps for meaningful family gatherings. Together, you can strengthen bonds and create lasting memories. Let's embark on this exciting adventure!

"If you want to change the world, go home and love your family."

— Mother Teresa

The Family Council is not just another task to add to your to-do list; it is a practice that makes everything else more teachable. When families meet regularly, children learn that their voices matter, that problems can be solved together, and that responsibility is a choice rather than something imposed on them.

Start here. Start simple. Start this week.

Part 1

The Problem Worth Solving

Why Kids Aren't Ready

Something has gone steadily wrong in how we prepare children for life. The statistics are startling — more than half of adults aged 18–29 are still living at home, the highest rate in over a century. Employers report that 75% of new hires lack basic workplace communication and follow-through. Two out of three graduates can't handle a realistic problem without a script.

This is not a generational failure of character. It is a structural failure of preparation.

What Schools Teach	What Life Actually Requires
• Test-taking and memorization • Academic subjects • Following instructions • Individual performance	• Problem-solving under pressure • Managing money and responsibility • Communication and integrity • Leading and collaborating

The gap between what schools teach and what life demands is wide — and families must bridge that gap.

Why Reacting Doesn't Work

Most parenting happens in reaction — a forgotten backpack, a bad grade, an argument. We fix the crisis, move on, and repeat the cycle next week. This approach is exhausting and ineffective because it trains children to wait for rescue rather than develop ownership.

Children don't need perfect parents. They need present, intentional ones.

The Family Council replaces reaction with rhythm. When families meet weekly, small problems get addressed before they become crises, expectations are clear, and children begin to understand that they are a valued part of the team.

Part 2 The Structure

Four Building Blocks of Life Readiness

The ReadiKids system is built on four building blocks. Every Family Council meeting strengthens one or more of these areas. Think of each one as a muscle — it only grows when it is exercised consistently.

The Four Building Blocks

- Practical Life Skills — the ability to cook, fix, manage, and navigate daily life.
- Mental & Emotional Strength — resilience, grit, and the confidence to try again after failure.
- Relational & Civic Capability — communicating well, collaborating, and being a responsible citizen.
- Character & Virtue — honesty, ethics, morals, integrity, courage, and follow-through.

ReadiKids® considers the whole child—their hands, mind, heart, and character—and provides families with a straightforward way to develop these attributes through real-life experiences.

Why Structure Matters

Structure creates consistency when motivation fades. It turns good intentions into repeated action. And repeated action is what builds capable, independent children.

Your Family Council is your training ground where life readiness is built.

How Responsibility Transfers to Children

The single most important shift you will make as a parent is this — moving from doing things for your children to doing them with your children — and eventually watching your children own them completely.

This transfer doesn't happen overnight. It happens through consistent, structured practice. In the early years, parents lead nearly everything. As children experience success in Family Council meetings — sharing wins, solving problems, owning a weekly responsibility — they naturally reach for more. The role of the parent gradually shifts from director to coach, and eventually to proud observer.

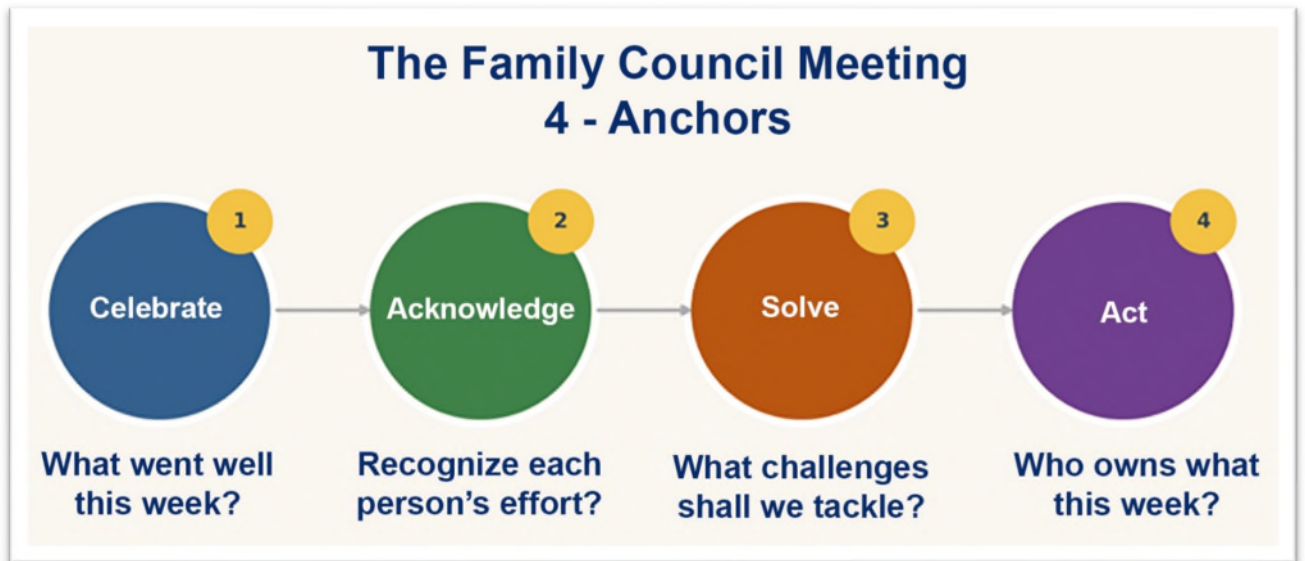
This is the goal — not a compliant child, but a capable adult in training.

Part 3

Running Your Family Council

The Four Anchors

Every effective meeting needs a structure. Without it, conversations drift into complaints or silence. The Family Council uses four anchors — a consistent sequence that keeps every meeting productive, positive, and purposeful.



Anchor 1 — Celebrate

Begin with what went well—it makes a difference. When families start here, the meeting feels more positive and productive. It sets the tone that we notice and appreciate the good in each other.

Suggested Questions to Use

- What was the best moment of your week?
- Did anyone accomplish something they are proud of?
- What made you smile or feel good this week?

Anchor 2 — Acknowledge

Celebration focuses on events. Acknowledgment focuses on people. Each family member names something they appreciate about another person — a specific behavior, a kind word, an act of responsibility. This builds the kind of relational trust that makes difficult conversations possible later.

Suggested Questions to Use

- Who helped you this week, and how?
- Did you notice someone in our family being kind or responsible?
- Is there anything you want to thank someone for?

Anchor 3 — Solve

Now the meeting addresses at least one challenge. Trying to solve everything is exhausting — choosing one problem and actually solving it builds momentum and models good judgment.

A critical rule — let children suggest solutions first. Wait. Resist the urge to fix it immediately. Children who are allowed to think will surprise you.

Problem-Solving Guidelines

- State the problem without blame — describe what happened, not who did wrong.
- Ask everyone — “What ideas do you have for solving this?”
- Let the youngest speak first so older siblings don't dominate.
- Choose one solution together and assign a clear owner.
- Keep a short list — each solution has one owner and one deadline.

Anchor 4 — Act

Every meeting ends with clear ownership. Each family member leaves knowing exactly what they are responsible for this week. This is where the ownership habit is born.

The formula is simple — each task, one owner, one deadline.

Action Examples by Age

- Ages 4-6: Set the table three nights this week. Pack your own backpack each morning.
- Ages 7-10: Plan and help make one family dinner. Do laundry with minimal reminders.
- Ages 11-14: Manage a household budget for a family activity. Research a problem the family is facing.
- Ages 15+: Lead the next Family Council meeting. Manage their own schedule for a full week.

Part 4

Your Agenda Cards

Your Starter Pack includes four Agenda Cards — one for each anchor. Place them on the table at the start of every meeting. They serve as a visible guide so that everyone, including children, can follow along and contribute.

Below is a reference for what each card contains:

CELEBRATE

What went well this week?

Every person shares at least one win — big or small.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Who deserves recognition?

Catch each other doing something right. Name it out loud.

SOLVE

What challenge shall we work on?

One problem per meeting. Let kids suggest solutions first.

ACT

Who owns what this week?

Each person leaves with one clear responsibility and deadline.

Tip — In families with multiple children, give the youngest child the 'CELEBRATE' card. Give an older child the 'ACT' card. Then ask that they keep a log of everyone's responsibilities. Ownership of the meeting builds ownership in life.

Part 5

Your First Meeting

Before You Start

Choose a day and time right now. Write it down. Put it on the calendar. The specific time matters less than the consistency. Maybe Sunday evenings work well for many families. Possibly Friday dinner. Pick what fits your life — and protect it.

Your first meeting will be imperfect. That's expected and even good. The point is not a flawless meeting. The point is to begin the rhythm.

Your First Meeting Setup

- Find a quiet spot at your kitchen or dining table.
- Place the four Agenda Cards in the center of the table.
- Turn off the TV. Turn off the phones, parents included.
- Start with — 'Tonight we are starting something new as a family.'
- Tell the children this is a meeting where everyone's voice matters.
- Keep it to 20 minutes for the first meeting — shorter is better.

What to Say at the Start

"In our family, we are going to have a meeting every [day] at [time]. This is where we celebrate each other, solve problems together, and decide who is responsible for what. Everyone gets to speak. Everyone gets to listen. Starting tonight."

That's it. Simple and direct. Children respond well to clarity.

When Children Resist

Some children — especially teens — will roll their eyes. That's normal. Don't negotiate the meeting's existence—invite engagement with the content instead.

What Children Say

"Do we have to?"

"This is boring."

"Can we skip it this week?"

"I don't have anything to say."

Suggested Replies

"Yes. And I want to hear your ideas."

"Tell me one thing that wasn't boring this week."

"This is one thing we don't skip."

"You always have something. I'll wait."

Part 6

The First Family Challenge

Responsibility Week

At your initial meeting, kick things off with the First Family Challenge. This challenge will focus on creating a Responsibility Week, which will be introduced during the first gathering and completed before your second meeting.

The goal of this challenge is straightforward — each child will select at least one responsibility to take on for the week. This is a great opportunity for them to learn about ownership and accountability in a supportive environment.

Age-Appropriate Responsibility Examples

- Ages 4-6: Feed the dog. Help set the dinner table. Pick up toys before bed.
- Ages 7-10: Pack their own school backpack. Help with grocery unloading. Take out the trash on schedule.
- Ages 11-14: Prepare a simple family meal once this week. Manage their own homework schedule without reminders.
- Ages 15-18: Plan a family budget for a meal or outing.

At your second meeting, each child reports back on their responsibility.

Ask three questions:

- Did you complete it?
- What made it harder than you expected?
- What do you want to own next week?

Reporting back is as important as doing. It closes the loop on ownership and trains children to be accountable to the family — not just to a parent.

Part 7

The Readiness Backpack

What Children Are Building

Included in your Starter Pack is the Readiness Pack Tracker — the tool that connects every Family Council meeting to a larger vision — raising children who are truly ready for life.

Each time a child completes a weekly challenge, they earn a badge for their Readiness Pack.

Badges mark growth, not perfection.

A child who struggles, resets, and tries again has earned the Courage badge more honestly than someone who never hits a bump.

These badges are symbols of real progress — evidence of skills practiced, character strengthened, and effort that mattered.

They mean something because they're earned.



The Readiness Backpack Badges

- Responsibility — completing a commitment without being reminded.
- Problem Solver — identifying a challenge and contributing to its solution.
- Courage — attempting something hard, even when afraid of failure.
- Money Wise — choosing to save, spend, or give with purpose.
- Team Player — contributing to the family's shared goals rather than only personal ones.

As children add each new skill to their Readiness Pack, they gain something more valuable than badges — a growing identity as someone capable. When children see themselves as capable, they act capable.

This is the ReadiKids goal — children who believe in their own readiness, because they have earned it.

Part 8

Values and Virtue

The Heart of the Meeting

Family Council is not just a logistics meeting. It is a values meeting. Every week, the family reinforces — quietly and powerfully — what matters in this home.

Children absorb values by living them alongside you. What they see every day teaches more than any explanation.

What You Say	What the Meeting Demonstrates'
"Be honest."	A parent admits they dropped the ball this week.
"We finish what we start."	The meeting happens even when it's inconvenient.
"Help others."	The family works together on a neighbor's problem.
"Own your mistakes."	A child reports honestly — 'I didn't finish my responsibility

Your Family Council is where character is formed in small, weekly doses. That is far more powerful than any single lesson or lecture.

Part 9

Practical Tips for Lasting Success

Keep It Short

Twenty to thirty minutes is ideal. A focused, productive 25-minute meeting every week is worth more than an occasional two-hour marathon. When meetings run long, children associate them with burden. When they run short and purposeful, children look forward to them.

Celebrate – More Than You Solve

The Celebrate and Acknowledge anchors should take as much time as the Solve and Act anchors. Families that skip the positive anchors find that children dread the meeting. Make sure every person leaves feeling seen and valued — every week.

Let Children Lead

Rotate the role of Meeting Leader among family members who are old enough. A 10-year-old who has run the family meeting for 1 month is learning leadership in a way no classroom can replicate. Give them the Agenda Cards. Step back. Watch what happens.

Write Things Down

Keep a simple Family Council notebook or sheet. Write down the responsibilities assigned each week and review them at the next meeting. When children see their name written next to a responsibility, it becomes real. When they see it checked off, they feel the satisfaction of completion. Writing things down shows children that this matters.

What to Do When a Responsibility Isn't Completed

This will happen — and it is one of the most valuable moments in Family Council. Resist the urge to rescue or lecture.

Instead, use these three questions:

- What got in the way?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Do you want to carry this responsibility into next week, or pass it to someone else?

The third question is powerful. Giving children the choice between ownership and reassignment teaches self-awareness and integrity — not just compliance.

A Note for Single Parents and Blended Families

Family Council works for every family structure. If you are a single parent, the meeting is still valuable — even with two people. If you have a blended family, the meeting becomes one of the most important rituals for building shared culture across different backgrounds and histories. Start small. Be consistent. The rhythm will build itself.

Part 10

The Bigger Picture

Your Family Council Starter Pack is the beginning of something larger. Once your family has established the weekly meeting rhythm, you have built the foundation for every other life skill in the ReadiKids system.

Future ReadiKids packs — Explorer, Pathfinder, and Trailblazer levels — introduce deeper skills, richer challenges, and age-appropriate stories that your family can use as meeting topics. Each pack adds to the Readiness Pack.



Every pack is designed to be used inside your Family Council meetings. The stories your children read, the challenges they complete, and the badges they earn — all of it flows through the weekly meeting you are starting today.

"Habits change families more than information does."
— ReadiKids Family Council Guide

Your Next Step

You have everything you need to begin. This week, before the week ends, hold your first Family Council.

Your First Week Checklist

- Pick a day and time for your weekly Family Council.
- Place the four Agenda Cards on the table.
- Hold your first meeting — 20 minutes is plenty.
- Introduce Responsibility Week — each child chooses one responsibility to own.
- Write down each person's responsibility with their name.
- At next week's meeting, report back together.

If you are consistent for four weeks, you will begin to notice something remarkable — your children will remind you about the meeting. That is the moment the habit has taken hold.

At that point, you will have already changed your family's trajectory — one weekly meeting at a time.

ReadiKids®

Building Life-Ready Families, One Week at a Time.

www.ReadiKids.org

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