

# The First Step in a Successful Family Meeting: Instituting the Ground Rules

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Establishing a *Family Code of Conduct* is an essential precondition for holding successful family meetings. Effective and open communication is best facilitated when all family members agree on rules of conduct. A Family Code of Conduct, in itself, cannot prevent outbreaks of “emotional triggers,” which can recall past painful events among others, but it may diminish their number and intensity.

## 1

### The Advisor’s Role: Establish Clear and Easy-to-Understand Rules

- Civility is expected from everyone.
- Cell phones must be put away or put on silent mode.
- Every family member gets a chance to articulate their thoughts.
- Each member is obligated to listen carefully when another member is speaking.
- There will be no interruptions until a person finishes their point.
- Each family member has an obligation to be honest, without blaming or judging another.
- Each member is to be open to unexpected outcomes.
- Yelling will not be tolerated—under any circumstances.

## 2

### Who Administers the Family Code of Conduct?

The financial advisor, an external party, or an appointed family member is responsible for adherence to the family code of conduct.

This may involve frequent reminders of the agreed-upon rules, suggesting slowing down discussions or even taking a break.

The advisor needs to remind everyone that nonadherence to the code of conduct disrupts the possibility for open, honest communication, and that the rules have been agreed upon by all members of the family.

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