

Family Gatherings

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Family gatherings can be small or large, and they occur for all sorts of reasons. For instance, some families gather at their grandparents' house every weekend, spending hours in conversation and they prepare and then enjoy tasty recipes that have been passed down for generations. Some gather every weekend in the fall to watch a television broadcast of their college or professional football team's games. Some gather every summer at the family's vacation home to spend a week together—perhaps disconnected from any digital devices. Others have family reunions every few years. With the busy lives that many families live these days, even a week night dinner with immediate family members could be considered a family gathering. Some families use virtual meeting platforms so that family members can enjoy one another's company even though they may be physically separated by thousands of mile. In this workshop, we will share our stories about the ways in which our families gather.

A Few Quotations about Family Gatherings

“No matter how you feel about your extended family or family gatherings, you will be attending. This is because now the ultimate reason for attending family gatherings is for your children to have the time of their lives with their cousins. Little kids love their cousins. I'm not being cute or exaggerating here. Cousins are like celebrities for little kids. If little kids had a *People* magazine, cousins would be on the cover. Cousins are the barometers of how fun a family get-together will be. ‘Are the cousins going to be there?’ Fun!”—Jim Gaffigan, comedian

“The things that make me happiest in the whole world are going on the occasional picnic, either with my children or with my partner. Big family gatherings, and being able to go to the grocery store - if I can get those things in, I'm doing good.”—Kate Winslet, actor

“There is no such thing as fun for the whole family.”— Jerry Seinfeld, comedian

“If you don't believe in ghosts, you've never been to a family reunion.”— Ashleigh Brilliant, author

“I wish that I could relate to the people I'm related to.”—Jeff Foxworthy, comedian

Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Which of the above quotations resonate with you?
2. What are your earliest memories of family gatherings?
3. What have been the catalysts or occasions for gatherings in your family?
4. What are your most vivid memories of family gatherings?
5. Which family gathering has been most meaningful to you? Why?
6. Who in your family is known for organizing family gatherings?
7. If you have organized small or large family gatherings, what have been the biggest challenges?
8. Which family members do you most enjoy seeing at family gatherings?
9. What kinds of family gatherings are the most fun/enjoyable?

10. Which family members are known as “the life of the party” at family gatherings?
11. What kinds of food come to mind when you think of family gatherings?
12. What is the largest family gathering that you have attended? What was that like?
13. What kinds of activities have you engaged in at family gatherings?
14. What kinds of activities at family gatherings have been the most fun?
15. At family gatherings, who have you most enjoyed seeing?
16. What are some locations for your family’s gatherings?
17. Which locations have you enjoyed the most?
18. What are the most common topics for conversations at your family gatherings?
19. Has family history been a topic or even a theme at any of your family gatherings?
20. If you have had family gatherings via Zoom or some other virtual meeting platform, what has that been like?
21. How do you benefit from family gatherings?
22. What would the ideal family gathering look like?
23. In general, what do you see as the benefit of family gatherings?