

EBOOK SERIES

Your Family Constitution

**WHAT THE HECK IS A
FAMILY CONSTITUTION?**

www.yourfamilyconstitution.com



Scott Gale

WHAT THE HECK IS A FAMILY CONSTITUTION?

“There are no problems we cannot solve together, and very few that we can solve by ourselves.”

—LYNDON B. JOHNSON

THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1787)

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

These famous words represent the guiding principles of the original United States Constitution, as well the 27 amendments that would eventually follow. Fifty-five Founding Fathers produced this historic text during the summer of 1787, as they established a vision for a new nation.

Through months of careful thought, heated debate and unprecedented compromise, these Founding Fathers balanced the interest of 13 sovereign states to create the document that would be the platform of freedom for centuries to come. They may not have appreciated the full magnitude of their achievement; nevertheless, what they accomplished *together* was nothing short of remarkable.



THE FAMILY CONSTITUTION

(Irvine, California, 2007)

The U.S. Constitution set the basis for a new nation. The NQEFFL Constitution established unity amongst 12 fantasy franchise owners. The Family Constitution instituted a firm household foundation for four individuals and a dog.

The scale and application of each of these constitutions vary tremendously. However, the documents bear certain resemblances. The same basic principles (unity, justice, tranquility and promotion of common welfare) guide purpose and process. Each document permanently changed the human dynamic between its constituents. Finally, each constitution established a platform for effective growth, capable of evolving over time.

So, what is a Family Constitution? How did it enable my family to progress? Keep reading. I'm about to explain the driving forces behind our Family Constitution. I'm about to share the most important lessons that I ever learned as a dad.

Rewards and Consequences

Our Family Constitution relies on compounding rewards and consequences to steer behavior. Jack and Max's positive choices result in allowance, sleepovers and other privileges. Rewards increase with continuity, motivating the kids to maintain a streak of good performance.

Likewise, poor decisions by Jack and Max compel escalating consequences. Extra chores get layered on. They lose privileges such as television and the right to visit friends. They go to bed early. They spend time alone in their room. They do push-ups, sit-ups and laps around our block.

Our Family Constitution demands performance by Mom and Dad too, but with different targets and incentives. Karen and I have our own assigned chores. We're prohibited from yelling, whining and name-calling, just like the kids. I workout three times each week to earn the right to watch football on Sundays.

Although the real reward for us is a functional family, Karen and I can also earn the right to select family outings, games and meals. Our consequences for inappropriate behavior are identical to the kids'. I've done sit-ups and push-ups when I've raised my voice. I've contributed money to a swear jar after letting bad words slip. By accepting these consequences, I'm able to demonstrate the importance of abiding by our Family Constitution.

The common thread between my family members and me is that we are all responsible for our own actions. We all face consequences of appropriate magnitude which guide our decisions. We all hold each other accountable for following the household rules that we agreed upon in our Family Constitution.

Understanding and Empowerment

Our Family Constitution embodies mutual understanding and empowerment. We leverage honest communication and joint focus to produce an agreed upon set of household standards. The rules are the rules. No need for argument or debate.

We empower our Family Constitution to create the behavioral choices for us. Karen, Jack, Max and I each recognize the finite impacts of our actions. Carefully selected boundaries, combined with absolute rewards and consequences, effectively guide behavior. Good decisions improve the quality of our individual and collective lives. All things considered, the right choice usually qualifies as the most desirable option.

Simplicity

Adjusting to new rules and routines takes both energy and resolve. I desperately wanted my family to succeed without frustration and resentment. For that reason, our Family Constitution started simple.

We started small and allowed our structure to grow. We chose to address only a few immediate issues at first, including bedtime, chores and television usage. We surrounded these basic issues with straightforward boundaries and rules. We set the stage for immediate success.

WHERE'S THE PAYOFF?

The Family Constitution is a sustained investment in family. It takes time, energy and commitment. So where is the payoff? How long does it take to reap the benefits?

The short answer is that the process of creating a Family Constitution is an investment in faith. The timing and amount of return on invested effort depends entirely on the particular family's focus, personalities and circumstances.

Remember, my family's problems didn't clear up overnight. Some issues still have yet to be addressed. But, the simple fact is that we made progress. We got better in each of the ways that I'll describe below. I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

Time and Efficiency

Our Family Constitution put precious time back in our lives. As we built structure, we examined our family dynamic and became more efficient. We redistributed household responsibilities, changed our method of recording and keeping appointments, and reshuffled our scheduled activities.

We also reduced time spent on debate. Firm structure meant fewer issues to clash over. Many time-consuming and emotionally-taxing arguments faded in the wake of clarity and consistency. Not only do we now find ourselves with more time, the quality of our time together has dramatically improved.

Communication

The Family Constitution process broke down barriers to communication. As my family went through the steps, we talked through issues and found solutions together. We gained understanding of each others' concerns. We replaced fear and indifference in our interpersonal relationships with respect, appreciation and trust.

At our weekly family meetings, we now plan and coordinate schedules and needs for coming weeks. We discuss current issues and anticipate concerns on the horizon. We put everything out on the table to ensure we don't again reach the point of meltdown.

Accountability

Our Family Constitution established individual accountability, assigning distinct responsibilities and expectations to each family member. If a chore isn't done, we know who slipped. If Jack or Max misses his bedtime, he can no longer blame it on extraneous circumstances.

I had desired to teach responsibility to my kids for a long time. Unfortunately, I never knew how or when to do it. Our Family Constitution has proven to be the perfect instructional forum, as each of us has a distinct role and we can effectively review performance at our weekly family meeting.

Values

The Family Constitution enabled Karen and me to better impart our standards and beliefs upon our kids. The constitutional process caused both of us to examine ourselves and define our core family values. We talked openly and wove our independent ideals into an integrated vision. We built structure around our shared principles.

Improved communication also enabled Karen and me to talk to Jack and Max about sensitive issues without emotional discharge. We now serve as better role models because we're more relaxed. As a family, we anticipate and discuss upcoming matters each year, as we prepare for our annual amendment. In this way, Karen and I can express our beliefs and parental concerns to our boys before they must make critical choices.

For more information on
personalized family coaching, visit

www.yourfamilyconstitution.com

Parenting Resources • Workshops • Family Coaching

Thank you for your interest in *Your Family Constitution* Ebooks. If you enjoyed this Ebook and would like to read more, please visit www.yourfamilyconstitution.com to learn about the book, *Your Family Constitution; A Modern Approach To Family Values and Household Structure*, as well as related tools and services to make parenting easier and more rewarding.

Inside *Your Family Constitution*™ you'll learn...

- The four most overlooked signs that your household is becoming “out of control”...and a step-by-step process for correcting problems and appreciating family time.
- How to determine which important traits you most want to pass on to your children....and how to effectively transfer those qualities in a fun and meaningful way.
- How to assess your emotional availability to your family....and how to make adjustments to ensure you have the time for what matters. An in-depth look at the 3C's (clarity, consistency and commitment) that every family needs to run smoothly.
- Inside tips on how to understand what motivates your kids....and how to use this information to find “win-win” solutions that really work.
- Ten fun and healthy activities that your family members can enjoy together...that don't need to be plugged in.
- The keys to anticipating “big kid” and teenage issues....and a method to solve challenges before they become topics of concern.
- Common symptoms of entitlement in today's youth culture....and how to teach your child the difference between “learn” and “deserve” before it's too late.

Thank you again for taking interest in *Your Family Constitution*.

Sincerely,



Your Family Constitution

“Enjoy Parenting to the Fullest and Raise Great Kids”