

Family Meetings

Lily Wang

BEFORE YOU READ: How does your family make decisions? Is there a hierarchy in your family? If so, describe it.

A Chinese Tradition

Most of the families in China have a tradition of discussing anything important together in a meeting. I have a big family in China with 11 people: my parents have three daughters, three sons-in-law, two grandsons, and one granddaughter.

Everyone in the family expresses their opinions in the family meeting. Sometimes in a family, there is a hierarchy. First, the oldest child says what he or she is thinking. The last person who makes a speech is almost always the father. Finally, the father will make the decision.

Staying Connected by Video Call

I am the oldest sister in my family. As an adult, I lived in Beijing, and my parents lived in another city, which was a long way from Beijing. My two sisters lived in the same city as my parents. They often visited my parents and took care of

them. Although I was rarely present for family meetings, I would tell my father about my opinion by video call. My father always shared my ideas with other family members. If someone did not agree with my opinion,

the family meeting would take a break and call me to ask my feelings and give me a chance to express them again. Finally, my father would announce the final decision of this meeting.

These family meetings taught me about ne-



gotiation. I learned that it is possible to find a solution by discussing a problem together. When I worked as chief editor in the publishing industry for over 10 years in China, this model helped me resolve many problems.

If something is going on with my family in China, we still have a family meeting. My mother always

tells everyone that it is very important to hear my opinion because I am the oldest daughter of my family. I love my family and miss them, and I have a deep respect that they still need my thoughts and ideas from so far away.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Describe the problem-solving model that Lily's family uses. Has she used this model in other parts of her life?
2. Describe a problem-solving model in your family. How might this model be helpful or not helpful in other parts of life, such as in politics or in the workplace?
3. Read the article on the next page. How does that writer solve a problem in her family?
4. Notice how you make the plural of "son-in-law" (first paragraph). Compare it to how you make the plural of "grandson."

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Lily Wang is an immigrant from China, and she has been living in Boston for less than a year. She is a student at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA. Her wish is to be able to write a book introducing the real United States to Chinese immigrants. She would also like to translate U.S. literature into Chinese.

