

Scripted Family Meeting Role Play “A Soaking Wet Cat, A Very Sad Kid, and I-Already-Said-No Dad”

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Participants: Mom, Dad, Kelly (age 13 - ish), and Chris (age 8 – ish) [As is traditional in scripted role plays, anyone may read any part, without concern over gender or age.]

Mom (Facilitator): Welcome to the family meeting. Thank you all for coming. I know today was a busy day, and I think it’s great that we’re all here. I signed up for Facilitator this time. I see that Kelly signed up as Recorder. And Dad signed up for refreshments. Thanks.

I want to open the meeting with time for compliments. Who would like to begin by sharing a compliment for someone in the family?

Kelly: I will. I want to compliment Mom for the awesome zucchini bread she made out of that giant zucchini. Like we planned last week, I took a loaf of it to Sue next door, and she called my cell today to tell me it was the best zucchini bread she’d ever had. I agree with her. Nice work, Mom.

Mom: Thanks, Kelly.

Chris: I’d like to compliment Kelly for being kind. I had a pretty awful day yesterday, and he/she asked me what was wrong and brought me a glass of cold water just to be nice.

Kelly: Thank you.

Chris: And I’d also like to compliment Dad for helping me fix the puncture in my bike tube. That was the first time I ever had that happen. I’m not sure I could fix it on my own again, but maybe if Dad helps me one more time I’ll get it. You’re a good teacher at home, Dad, besides at school.

Dad: Thanks. You did a good job at that too. You kept your cool when the patch didn’t hold and we had to do it over.

Mom: I’d like to compliment all three of you for helping out at the nature trail clean-up. You were such good sports when it started pouring down rain. You could have easily blamed me for getting us into that, but you all just laughed about it. I really like our family.

Kelly: It helped a little to know that we got hot fudge sundaes on the way home!

Dad: Yeah, I liked that plan too.

Mom: Are there any other compliments? (pause.....) Okay, then are there any announcements?

Chris: I finished my Identity Book project for school today.

Mom: Super! Other announcements? (no response.....) Then let's begin with the agenda. I see we have one item for today: "Cat Inside." Would the person who put that on the agenda, explain their concern?

Chris: That was me.

Mom: Go ahead...

Chris: I know I said I wouldn't bring Katie inside when you guys said I could get a cat, but I need to change my mind. I have changed my mind. I want her to come inside the house.

Dad: Well, that's easily solved. It's not going to happen. A deal is a deal, and that's what you agreed to. End of discussion.

Chris: (puts head down on table, discouraged, ready to cry) Ohhhhhhhhhhhhh...

Kelly: (to everyone) I thought Family Meetings were a place where we could talk out our problems. Chris won't really get to talk about why that's on the agenda if it's the end of discussion. I thought we were supposed to Bounce Back for the person who talks.

Mom: Thanks for that reminder, Kelly. Kelly, would you be willing to Bounce Back for both Chris and Dad, so we make sure we've understood them.

Kelly: Sure, I guess so. Chris said he/she knows that Katie isn't supposed to come in the house and that was the agreement worked out in order to get a cat. But now he/she is thinking it would be good to have Katie in the house after all. He/She has changed her mind. Is that right, Chris?

Chris: (grumpily) Okay, but I can see it doesn't matter what I think.

Mom: It is important for us to know what you think, Chris. We'll get back to you in just a minute, so you can tell us more.

Kelly: And Dad said that this was already decided when we first worked out the plan for Chris getting a cat. Katie is an outside cat, and Chris agreed to that and Dad doesn't think we need to go over it again. Did I understand right, Dad?

Dad: Exactly. Like I said, a deal is a deal. It made sense then and it makes sense now.

Mom: Chris, you said you've changed your mind. Could you say a little more about that?

Chris: Well, when Aunt Jenny offered to give us one of their kittens, I was so excited about having Katie, that I didn't mind keeping her outside. It was summer then, and we had a lot of things we could do and places we could be together. But winter is coming, and it's already been raining a lot. A lot! That makes it way different than I thought it would be. It seems like it's always raining, and there's no place to be with Katie that I don't get soaking wet. Even the porch doesn't have a dry place, and I can't crawl under the house to stay dry like Katie does. I need to let her inside. Please! People change their minds sometimes, and other people should listen to them.

Dad: (to Chris, accusingly) So you think I don't listen?

Mom: Could we pause for a minute. I'd like to give Dad a chance to Bounce Back what Chris just said.

Dad: Okay. Chris said the summer was a great time for a new cat – lots of places to play and things to do outside, but when the rain started it hasn't been so fun. It seems like there isn't any place to be with Katie and still stay dry, unless it's under the house... (smiling)... which might be a little tricky. Chris also said that sometimes people change their minds and it's nice when people listen to each other.

Mom: Did Dad seem to hear what you said, Chris?

Chris: Yes. Except I also said... Please, Dad, let Katie inside. I don't think Mom or Kelly either one would care. It's just you – because of what you said about that cat that had fleas. But Katie doesn't have fleas. And she can learn to use a litter box.

Mom: Let me summarize for us. Katie is remembering what Dad said last summer about the neighbors having to fumigate their house because they found fleas everywhere. Dad said he didn't want that to happen in our own home, and just didn't like the idea of a cat pooping in the house. Chris didn't think it would be a problem to have Katie outside, but has found that – with all the rain this fall – there isn't a place for her to be with her cat and stay dry. She has brought her concern to our Family Meeting to see if together we can help work out a solution that works for everybody. Shall we start brainstorming now? Kelly, will you remind us all of the brainstorming rules?

Kelly: Sure...

- Any serious idea is written down.
- No trashing an idea when it's given, even if you don't like it.
- We evaluate ideas later.
- Remember that one idea can "spark" another than might really work.

Mom: Thanks, Kelly. Who would like to begin by giving an idea they think might work?

Chris: I will. My idea is: Let Katie come inside the house.

Kelly: I got it down.

Mom: Someone else?

Chris: Or I could say: Let Katie come inside the house, but stay in my room.

Mom: What other ideas might work to help Dad feel comfortable too?

Kelly: Build a little playhouse for Chris and Katie outside so they can get out of the rain together. That would be fun for other reasons too.

Dad: And expensive... Oh, yeah. I'm not supposed to criticize ideas yet. Sorry.

Chris: We already have the storage shed. Maybe we could use it.

Dad: If you don't mind being out there with the mice... Mice! Hey, we may have something here. It drives me crazy to open up a box and find mice droppings. I wonder if having Katie in there from time to time would scare them off?

Kelly: I'll put that down. "Katie go in the storage shed."

Chris: That could be good. That corner behind the extra frig could be a nice place for us to play together. I could make it into Katie's Cat Corner.

Mom: Let's look at what we have. Kelly, could you read the list?

Kelly:

- Katie come inside the house.
- Katie come inside but stay in Chris's room.
- Build a playhouse.
- Let Katie in storage shed and Chris make a Katie Cat Corner.

Mom: Are there some ideas that everyone thinks will work?

Dad: Well, I wouldn't mind saving for a playhouse that we could all build next summer, but that won't solve anything for now. I like the storage shed idea.

Chris: Me too!

Kelly: Sounds good to me.

Mom: That red footstool that I have in the Goodwill box might fit perfectly in the corner. Do you think Katie would take to the storage shed?

Dad: Well, Chris and I could make a cat door so she could come and go as she wishes.

Chris: Sweet, Dad! Thanks. Can we do it this weekend?

Dad: Works for me.

Mom: Kelly, could you read what we've all agreed to?

Kelly: Family Meeting, October 21:

We agree that we'll let Katie in the storage shed. Chris will make a cat corner. Chris and Dad will make a cat door – today or tomorrow.

Mom: Thanks, Kelly. And thanks to all of us. We started with a problem that didn't seem to have any solution. We ended up with an idea that no one had thought of earlier, but everybody likes. I'd say that was good listening, good brainstorming, and good problem-solving. Nice work. And I think I see refreshments ready on the counter.

Dad: Popcorn and fruit leather! I made it myself last night.

All: Nice, Dad/thanks/yum/etc.