



Inspector Ross

www.inspectorross.com.au

Family Regroup: The Guide

It can happen over time that the family meal degenerates into an endurance test. Kids play up, teens avoid it, and parents wish they could. Let's not even think about how it goes with in-laws. Still, family is family, and it might be possible to bring members back to the table willingly with a few 'nice' guidelines.

Try to get the whole family to sit at a table, any table, for a well-balanced, shared meal about once a week, and have them regroup on positives only – no challenging pressures permitted. It's just a time to touch base on individual and shared goals or activities, and to make sure everyone can feel at home when they're at home!

To save the ritual from becoming rigid, or conflicting with individual schedules, roll it forward a night from one week to the next (Sunday, then next Monday, the following Tuesday, etc.), so everyone gets a chance to turn up. For real fun, roster the cooking too!

A few tips all attendees should read beforehand:

- 1 Maintain an upbeat atmosphere (low-but-cheery instrumental music helps).
- 2 Share good news, laughs, and achievements of any kind.
- 3 If someone isn't carrying out chores or otherwise participating in the family, make a mental note to see them *separately* – keep the Family Regroup as welcoming as possible, so that everyone can look forward to this time together. Consider it 'bar-tees' (time out).
- 4 Cheeky habits die hard – help members stay happy by instituting a light-hearted penalty for provoking others – say, first one to do that gets to wash the dishes. ;-)

Family Regroup for Couples & Singles

Couples

- Tend to grooming & dress nicely.
- Add a little romance to the table – flowers or candles, etc.
- Pretend you're on a date: Ask and answer questions as though you didn't know the other person and would like to present your best side (please, no scoffing when your partner brags ;-).
- If there's an issue between you, agree to keep conversation light. Choose a different time to take it up, when it is more likely to result in win-win. Meanwhile, stick to topics you agree on, and eat in peace.

Singles

If you live alone, the Regroup works like this:

- Cook for 2 & store the second serve for tomorrow (a good idea any night). Still set the table and keep it for the meal only – TV off, phone silent. Don't worry, you won't have to stare at the walls while you chew. Your diary, a cookbook and a pencil are allowed a place at the table.
- Review status of communications with family, or people you might consider family, and diarise times to return messages, or to send special-occasion greetings and general catch-ups.
- If you would like a partner, diarise dating plans, or self-care plans to support your dating efforts.
- If you have time left over – since no-one's talking back ☺, browse a cookbook and plan next week's Regroup meal.

This keeps you in the habit of a) cooking meals fit to serve guests; and b) having potential guests to serve!