

LEAN IN

ALL-IN-ONE MEETING GUIDE

# PLANNING FOR EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

# Overview

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Getting to 50/50 means sharing responsibilities with your partner so you both can enjoy the full benefits of work and family. As the first session of our three-part series “Work & Family: Getting to 50/50,” this meeting will teach you strategies for defining balance and using open communication to achieve an equal partnership.

Many of the activities in this guide ask you to think through your relationship with a partner. If you’re not currently in a committed relationship, you can participate in the activities by imagining a past relationship that didn’t work and/or a future relationship you’d like to have. If you’re not interested in being in a committed relationship, we recommend moving on to the “Planning for Work/Life Balance” video.

## Meeting Goals

- Learn the markers of a good partner
- Understand how to structure equal partnerships, including using the “art of the deal” to negotiate how day-to-day tasks get done
- Practice open and honest communication to ensure both individuals’ needs are being met

## Pre-Meeting Prep

- Watch the “Planning for Equal Partnership” video individually or as a group at [leanin.org/education/planning-for-equal-partnership/](https://leanin.org/education/planning-for-equal-partnership/)
- Bring a printed copy of this discussion guide
- Prepare to share your One Action Update (if you’re doing this)



### Brought to you in partnership with...

Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober, co-authors of *Getting to 50/50: How Working Parents Can Have It All*, and the [Clayman Institute for Gender Research](#) at Stanford University.

# Meeting Agenda

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🕒 Approx. 105 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

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**1 Check-In** 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes  
Warm up, catch up, and get going **p.4**

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**2 Educational Activities** 🕒 Approx. 60 minutes  
Learn from experts and one another **p.5**

- **Activity 1: Key Takeaways** 🕒 Approx. 5 minutes  
Take a few minutes to review the core strategies presented in the “Planning for Equal Partnership” video **p.5**

- **Activity 2: What Does Balance Look Like to You?** 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes  
If you are currently in a partnership, does it feel equal? What would your ideal partnership look like? **p.6**

- **Activity 3: Practicing Open and Honest Communication** 🕒 Approx. 35 minutes  
As a group, practice this powerful strategy for creating equal partnerships at home? **p.8**

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**3 One Action** 🕒 Approx. 15 minutes  
The little push you need to go for it **p.9**

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**4 Wrap-Up** 🕒 Approx. 10 minutes  
What’s next and a few final words **p.11**

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**Optional Member Materials**  
One Action Update **p.13**

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# Meeting Guide

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## Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

### Step 1: Icebreaker

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

An icebreaker is a powerful tool to help us become present with one another and ourselves. One by one, fill in the sentence below and share it with your Circle. Listen carefully as each member takes a turn and say thank you when she's finished. Avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- Having an equal partner at home would empower me to . . .

### Step 2: Member Updates

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

Once you're warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!)

If you have a One Action Update, share that with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting. The goal is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

**For example, a member update might go like this:** "Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I'm thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I've been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we're going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action update]."

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## Education Activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 60 minutes for all activities

### Activity 1: Key Takeaways

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

As you kick off today's meeting, review the key takeaways from the "Planning for Equal Partnership" video individually or as a group:

#### **Be an anthropologist**

Be curious with your current or potential partner. Ask questions about his or her background (such as, what kind of career do you want to have? Who was responsible for child care and housework when you were growing up? What type of parent do you want to be?).

#### **Look for the markers of a good partner**

Notice if your potential partner is a good listener and is open to new ideas. Consider the other qualities you're looking for in a partner and look for signs that he or she fits the mold.

#### **Have a couple's one-on-one**

Set aside time each week to reflect on the previous week and discuss your upcoming schedule. This is also a good time to check in on emotions. What made you happy recently? Do you have any frustrations to share?

#### **Practice the art of the deal**

Learn to negotiate together to get things done. Dirty dishes in the sink? "You wash, I'll dry."

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## Activity 2: What Does Balance Look Like to You?

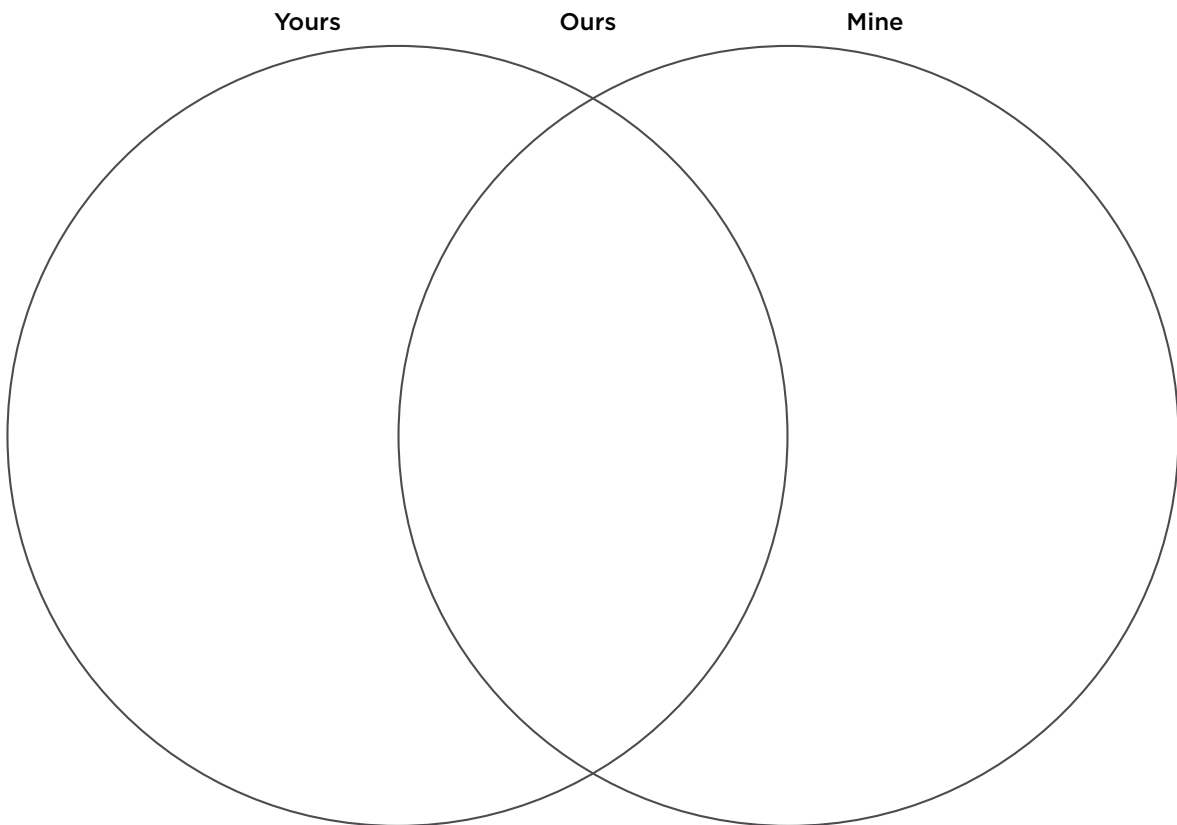
🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

### Step 1: Separate responsibilities into “yours,” “mine,” and “ours”

👤 Individual activity

🕒 10 minutes


Think about your current partnership or a desired partnership in the future. In the Venn diagram below, write the household and/or child care responsibilities you’d like to be responsible for on the right. List the responsibilities you’d like your partner to handle on the left. Write any responsibilities you’d like to share together in the middle.




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## Activity 2: What Does Balance Look Like to You? (cont.)

### Step 2: Reflect on your ideal breakdown of responsibilities

 Individual activity

 10 minutes

Reflect on your Venn diagram and spend a few minutes answering the questions below:

Have you spent time thinking about how you'd like to share responsibilities with your partner before? Was it easy to complete the activity, or did you find it difficult?

How have you dealt with challenges like balancing schedules, sharing responsibilities, or supporting each other's career goals in relationships in the past?

Were you satisfied with the way you handled those challenges? What, if anything, would you like to do differently in the future?

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## Activity 3: Practicing Open and Honest Communication

🕒 Approx. 35 minutes

### Step 1: Practice communicating openly

👤👤 Pair activity

🕒 5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

Break into small groups of two or three members and select one of the scenarios below to role-play (or create your own!). If you have extra time, you can select multiple scenarios.

- You're on a date and you'd like to learn more about this person's expectations about work and family life.
- You'd like to start holding weekly one-on-ones with your partner.
- You get home late and there they are—the dreaded dishes in the sink, waiting to be washed.
- Your kids leave a trail of shoes, clothing, and toys in their wake after coming home from the park with your partner while you're in the middle of another task.
- The child care provider for your toddler has a last-minute emergency on a day when you are giving a big presentation at work.

### Step 2: Share your reflections

👥 Group activity

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

As a group, use the role-play activities and your unique experiences to discuss successful strategies for maintaining open and honest communication in your partnership:

- What strategies seemed to work well in the role-plays? Why?
- What other tactics have you used to communicate openly and honestly? For this discussion, remember to share experiences but not advice (in other words, use “I” statements, such as, “What I personally found helpful in my situation was . . .”).



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## One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

### Step 1: Identify the action you’re going to take

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

As you’ve seen, open communication and asking questions are key foundations of an equal partnership. Identify a specific action you can take to help create the equal partnership you want (such as becoming an anthropologist, discussing how a certain chore will be done, or setting up a couple’s one-on-one every week).

In the space below, describe the action you would like to take and what you hope to accomplish.


Imagine with whom, when, and where it will happen.


Create a quick plan. What will you do to help create the equal partnership you want? Can you use some of the key takeaways in the video to achieve this?

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## One Action (cont.)

### Step 2: Share your One Action with your Circle

 Group activity

 2 minutes or less per member, 20 minutes total

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statement:

- In the next month, I plan to get closer to 50/50 by . . .

**Housekeeping Note:** We recommend you give an update on your One Action during your next meeting. On page 13 of this PDF, you'll find an optional worksheet to help you prepare your update.

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## Wrap-Up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

### Step 1: Finalize logistics of your next meeting

 Group activity

🕒 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting, including day and time, location, and food and drink responsibilities. Decide what you're going to do when you get together or who is going to send out ideas. You may also want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting so you can brainstorm improvements going forward.

### Step 2: Close on an energetic and inspirational note

 Group activity

🕒 1 minutes or less

As you wrap up the meeting, check in with yourself. How do you feel about your reflections today? Go around the Circle and share one word that sums up how it felt to share your experiences with the group before heading off!

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# Congratulations on a great meeting.

See the following pages for an optional member activity.

# One Action Update

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Use the following prompts to prepare your One Action Update before your next meeting, to maximize your time with your Circle.

- What situation did you plan to address?

- What action did you take?

- The outcome of my action was . . .

- In the end, I learned that . . .