



Sibling Rivalry

My children have trouble getting along. How can I help them?

No matter how hard you try to keep the peace, your children are likely to fight over toys, tattle on one another, and tease and criticize each other. Sibling rivalry is a natural part of growing up. Here are some tips on managing conflict between your children.



Remember that each child's needs are different.

Some parents feel it's important to treat their children the same way. Yet children often complain that things are "not fair" and that they are not receiving what the other sibling gets. Treating your children differently doesn't mean you are playing favorites. It's a way of showing that you appreciate how special they are.

While it's natural to notice differences between your children, try not to comment on these in front of them.

It is easy for a child to think that he is not as good or as loved as his sibling when you compare them. Remember, each child is special. Let each one know that.

As much as possible, stay out of your children's arguments.

While you may have to help younger children find ways to settle their differences, do not take sides. If your children try to involve you, explain that they need to figure out how to get along. Of course, you must get involved if the situation gets violent. Make sure your children know that such behavior is not allowed. If there is any reason to suspect that your children may become violent, watch them closely when they are together. Preventing violence is always better than punishing after the fact, which often makes the rivalry worse. Praise your children when they solve their arguments, and reward good behavior.

Be fair.

If you must get involved in your children's arguments, listen to all sides of the story. Also, give children privileges that are right for their ages and try to be consistent. If you allowed one child to stay up until 9:00 pm at 10 years of age, the other should have the same bedtime when he is 10.

Respect your child's privacy.

If it is necessary to punish or scold, do it with the child alone in a quiet, private place. Do not embarrass your child by scolding him in front of the others.

Family meetings can be a great way to work out sibling issues.

Some parents find that sharing some of their own experiences about growing up can help too. Just listening to your children can also help. Remember, this is their opportunity to learn about the give-and-take of human relationships.

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