

By Ruth Fett M.S.C., Parent Coach

Greetings!

Hello from Parent Team your source for information regarding parenting issues. This month we are going to tackle a tough issue for nearly every family with more than one child.

Sibling Rivalry is definitely one of the more common issues parents discuss with me as a parent coach. It can be very upsetting to hear your children fight and even more frustrating is what to do about it. The conflict between the children can cause the whole house to be filled with stress. Yet, some experts tell us not to get involved, others promote you step in and teach conflict resolution. What is the right way to handle conflict between our children. This newsletter is dedicated to this one important issue that can tear a family apart.

What causes the fighting in the first place?

Siblings can fight for a number of reasons:

1. Competition for attention.
2. Jealousy of what the other child appears to have.
3. Developmental reasons.

Toddlers are naturally protective of what they see as "mine."

Pre-schoolers have not yet learned taking turns.

School-age children have a strong sense of what is "not fair."

Teenagers are developing individuality.

4. Differing Temperments
5. How they see their parents resolve conflicts.

How to get them to stop or at least slow the battling.

Listening to the constant battling can be exhausting but we may be reinforcing the behavior without realizing it. When parents involve themselves in sibling disagreements they cause several problems.

1. The children learn to argue in order to gain attention from the parent.
2. With you refereeing for them they are denied the opportunity to problem solve on their own.
3. You may inadvertently send the message that one child is being rescued all the time. The rescued child gets the message they are not able to handle their problems and resentment can build in the

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other child.

Therefore a good general rule is to stay out of the fight unless it appears it is going get emotionally or physically harmful to the children.

When you do intervene, separate the children for a short cool down period. When you do come back together do not focus on who did what, plain and simple it takes two to fight and they are both responsible. You can simply lay down your expectation of being kind to one another or impose a logical consequence equally upon the children. Either way the goal is to teach the children what you do want them to do. Not punish them for what they have already done.

Setting Children Up for Success

Pro-active parenting can help prevent some fights. First discussing and posting some basic house expectations (rules) helps set the tone for the environment of the house. Positively phrase the expectations. For example: instead of "no name calling" use "kind words only and instead of "no hitting" use "gentle touches only." Also make it clear that no matter who started it both will be held accountable, this is incentive for at least one of them to walk away.

If the children are school-age solicit their help in writing up the expectations and then have weekly family meetings to reinforce the rules and discuss any issues that may be happening in the house.

Lastly and most importantly spend time with your children just having fun. Get down into their world, turn off your cell phone and just enjoy them. Even if you can only spare ten minutes a day, it can make a huge difference in their feelings and make it less likely they will feel the need to squabble with their sibling.

If you find this newsletter informative consider sharing it with a friend. If they find it helpful they can then subscribe to receive this regular supply of parenting information as well.

I would love to hear from anyone regarding topics they would like to see covered in this newsletter or any other suggestions on how to improve the newsletter.

Please remember that I offer a **free thirty minute consultation** to anyone facing challenging parenting issues. I have worked with parents of children of all ages on many, many different issues. Issues ranging from day to day bedtime routine and getting children to listen to heavy duty issues like drug usage and running away.

Call or e-mail me to schedule a free, no obligation consultation.

Sincerely,

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