
WHEN TO GET OUTSIDE HELP

Since some conflict between siblings is normal, it may be hard to recognize when sibling conflict in your family has gotten out of control. Following is a list to help you know when it is necessary to get help outside the family.

1. Physical fighting between siblings continues despite your attempts to make it stop.
2. Language is used to deliberately hurt, shame or humiliate a sibling despite your attempts to make it stop.
3. Behavior is used to deliberately hurt, shame or humiliate a sibling despite your attempts to make it stop.
4. You find your own behavior getting out of control when your children have conflicts.

RESOURCES

Books for Parents:

Siblings Without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

He Hit Me First: When Brothers and Sisters Fight by Louise Bates Ames and Carol Chas Haber.

Parenting With Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility by Jim Fay and Foster Cline.

Positive Discipline by Jane Nelsen.

Your Child's Health: A Pediatric Guide for Parents by Baron Schmitt.

How to Help Children With Common Problems by Charles E. Schaefer and Howard L. Millman.

Books For Children:

The Pain and The Great One by Judy Blume.

I'll Fix Anthony by Judith Viorst.

No Fighting, No Biting by Else Homebund Minarik.

The Berenstain Bears Get Into a Fight by Stan Berenstain.

The Quarreling Book by Charlotte Zolotou.

Diary of A Frantic Kid Sister by H. Coman.

Other Resources

Your child's doctor.

School Social Worker, Counselor or Psychologist.

Counselors in the community. See both the yellow and blue pages of the Lincoln Telephone book.

A Resource provided by LPS School Social Worker... because Families Matter.

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WHEN SIBLINGS FIGHT



"She took my candy!" "He hit me first!" "She called me a baby!" We can not expect our children to live together without some conflict. Siblings will not always feel loving toward each other. Arguing between siblings is normal, within limits. The key for parents is knowing what those limits are, when to stay out of sibling conflict and when and how to help.

Throughout the day, siblings are apt to be in situations which require them to work and play together. Some experts believe that children learn skills in how to handle conflict with others from their relationships with brothers and sisters. Children may tend to have more trouble getting along when they feel they have been treated unfairly, or are tired, bored or upset for other reasons. They may also argue with each other in order to get their parents' attention. Children observe how other family members handle conflict and are likely to repeat those behaviors in their own conflicts.

Children need to resolve most sibling conflicts themselves. Parents can help children learn how to do this by teaching them how to express their negative feelings in acceptable ways and how to problem solve.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

DO

Set family rules so that children know what behaviors are and are not allowed. Rules should be simple and specific, with clear consequences that children are aware of ahead of time. A rule against **PHYSICAL FIGHTING** should always be included.

Allow your child to express both positive and negative feelings about their siblings.

Help your child to identify their negative feelings toward a sibling in a non-hurtful way, e.g., “I am very mad at you”, rather than “I wish you were dead.”

Encourage children to find their own solutions to sibling conflicts and accept those solutions even if they don't seem fair to you. Be willing to make suggestions if they can't come up with possible solutions on their own.

Notice times your children are getting along and recognize and praise their behavior.

Try to spend time alone on a regular basis with each of your children.

Help children to pursue their own interests and abilities.

Help your child make their own friends, separate from their sibling(s).

Separate the children, or suggest a change in environment or activity when tension begins to build.

Give yourself a break. If you are sure no one will be hurt, leave the room. This allows children to work on their problems themselves.

DON'T

Do not allow physical fighting between siblings. Separate children for “cool down time.” Enforce the consequences set in your family rules.

Do not allow language between siblings to deliberately hurt, shame or humiliate. Words **DO** hurt and can be very damaging.

Avoid taking sides with one child. This can intensify the other child's desire to get even with the sibling and his need for your attention.

Don't encourage or reward tattling. This means not taking direct action about what you are told. Reporting of serious health and safety risks is not considered tattling.

Avoid comparing one child's behaviors or accomplishments with another.

Don't take on the job of referee. Children need to resolve most sibling conflicts themselves. Children will not learn how to resolve conflict if you do all the work.

When handling your own adult conflicts, don't use behaviors that you don't want your children to use. Be a good model for your children!

TEACH CHILDREN TO PROBLEM SOLVE

1. Have the children involved in the conflict identify the problem.
 2. Next, have them think of ways to solve the problem. This can be done together or separately, whatever will work the best. If children really can not come up with any workable solutions on their own, you may have to add a few suggestions.
 3. Have children pick and use the idea that seems the best to them.
 4. Remind children of the rules about physical fighting and name calling and what the consequences are for these behaviors.
 5. Once children know these steps and what you expect of them, they should be given the message that they are responsible for working out their differences themselves.
 6. You need only step in if an effort has really been made to solve the problem and children are truly stuck, or if you are worried about physical harm or hurtful language.
 7. Be realistic. Getting past angry feelings to problem solving takes lots of practice. Children may need lots of reminders about how to problem solve. This is different from solving problems for them. **Model this process yourself when you are in conflict.**
 8. Be patient. Very young children will need more adult involvement. When they have a conflict it is often helpful to redirect their attention to something new, or to separate them. They also need to learn to share and to say what is wrong in acceptable ways. You will need to “walk them through” the problem solving process over and over again until they become old enough to start to practice it on their own.
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