



Fitango Education
Health Topics

Sibling relationships



Overview

For a child, having a sibling often means having a constant companion who can provide support, love, and care for the child for the rest of his or her life. Sibling relationships often reflect the overall condition of cohesiveness within a family.

Overview

There are several ways in which sibling relationships can be complicated. For example, sibling rivalry, blended families, a large age difference, and gender differences are often areas that can lead to hostile sibling relationships.

Sibling Rivalry

While many kids are lucky enough to become the best of friends with their siblings, it's common for brothers and sisters to fight. Often, sibling rivalry starts even before the second child is born, and continues as the kids grow and compete for everything from toys to attention. As kids reach different stages of development, their evolving needs can significantly affect how they relate to one another.

Sibling Rivalry

It can be frustrating and upsetting to watch — and hear — your kids fight with one another. A household that's full of conflict is stressful for everyone. Yet often it's hard to know how to stop the fighting, and or even whether you should get involved at all. But you can take steps to promote peace in your household and help your kids get along.

****Why Kids Fight****

Sibling Rivalry

Many different things can cause siblings to fight. Most brothers and sisters experience some degree of jealousy or competition, and this can flare into squabbles and bickering. But other factors also might influence how often kids fight and how severe the fighting gets. These include:

Sibling Rivalry

-- Evolving needs. It's natural for kids' changing needs, anxieties, and identities to affect how they relate to one another. For example, toddlers are naturally protective of their toys and belongings, and are learning to assert their will, which they'll do at every turn. So if a baby brother or sister picks up the toddler's toy, the older child may react aggressively. School-age kids often have a strong concept of fairness and equality, so might not understand why siblings of other ages are tr

Sibling Rivalry

-- Individual temperaments. Your kids' individual temperaments — including mood, disposition, and adaptability — and their unique personalities play a large role in how well they get along. For example, if one child is laid back and another is easily rattled, they may often get into it. Similarly, a child who is especially clingy and drawn to parents for comfort and love might be resented by siblings who see this and want the same amount of attention.

Sibling Rivalry

-- Special needs/sick kids. Sometimes, a child's special needs due to illness or learning/emotional issues may require more parental time. Other kids may pick up on this disparity and act out to get attention or out of fear of what's happening to the other child.

Sibling Rivalry

-- Role models. The way that parents resolve problems and disagreements sets a strong example for kids. So if you and your spouse work through conflicts in a way that's respectful, productive, and not aggressive, you increase the chances that your children will adopt those tactics when they run into problems with one another. If your kids see you routinely shout, slam doors, and loudly argue when you have problems, they're likely to pick up those bad habits themselves.

Helping Kids Get Along

Simple things you can do every day to prevent fighting include:

-- Set ground rules for acceptable behavior. Tell the kids to keep

their hands to themselves and that there's no cursing, no name-calling,

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no yelling, no door slamming. Solicit their input on the rules — as well

as the consequences when they break them. This teaches kids that

they're responsible for their own actions, regardless of the situation

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or how provoked they felt, and discourages any attempts to negotiate

regarding who was "right" or "wrong."

-- Be proactive in giving your kids one-on-one attention directed to

their interests and needs. For example, if one likes to go outdoors,

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take a walk or go to the park. If another child likes to sit and read,

make time for that too.

-- Make sure kids have their own space and time to do their own thing —

to play with toys by themselves, to play with friends without a sibling

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tagging along, or to enjoy activities without having to share 50-50.

-- Show and tell your kids that, for you, love is not something that comes with limits. Let them know that they are safe, important, and loved, and that their needs will be met.

-- Have fun together as a family. Whether you're watching a movie,

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throwing a ball, or playing a board game, you're establishing a peaceful

way for your kids to spend time together and relate to each other. This

can help ease tensions between them and also keeps you involved. Since

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parental attention is something many kids fight over, fun family

activities can help reduce conflict.

-- If your children frequently squabble over the same things (such as

video games or dibs on the TV remote), post a schedule showing which

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child "owns" that item at what times during the week. (But if they keep

fighting about it, take the "prize" away altogether.)

-- If fights between your school-age kids are frequent, hold weekly

family meetings in which you repeat the rules about fighting and review

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past successes in reducing conflicts. Consider establishing a program

where the kids earn points toward a fun family-oriented activity when

they work together to stop battling.

-- Recognize when kids just need time apart from each other and the

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family dynamics. Try arranging separate play dates or activities for

each kid occasionally. And when one child is on a play date, you can

spend one-on-one time with another.

Keep in mind that sometimes kids fight to get a parent's attention.

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In that case, consider taking a time-out of your own. When you leave,

the incentive for fighting is gone. Also, when your own fuse is getting

short, consider handing the reins over to the other parent, whose

patience may be greater at that moment.



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