

Sibling Rivalry: Teaching Kids to be Kind

Part of the [Sibling Rivalry](#) Series



Sibling conflict is as old as Cain and Abel, as legendary as Cinderella and her stepsisters and can be as deadly as the daughters of King Lear. Parents should know the battles are inevitable and must prepare their kids to defuse potentially ugly situations. And there will be times when parents must come to a child's defense and say, "We are family, and we will not say anything that doesn't build up one another. We will respect each other."

Use these tips for encouraging kindness in the home:

Teach mutual respect. Do not allow your children to insult one another. Words are extremely powerful, and snide comments can damage deeply. Experts say every negative comment needs at least five positive remarks to even out. Teach your children to be kind and to appreciate each other.

Do not play favorites. In Genesis, we see the damage done by Jacob's favoritism of Joseph. Remember that all children are created equal, but not all children are the same. Recognize and praise each child's individual skills,

strengths and accomplishments without implying that one child is somehow better.

Teach conflict-management. Do not deny your child's feelings, but help him learn to express emotions in an appropriate way. If you see your child acting jealously, encourage him to identify the emotion by saying, "I understand that you feel bad because..." or "I know you hurt because..." Helping your children figure out the causes of their actions will help them learn how to deal with problems in the future.

Do not ignore good behavior. To attention-starved kids, negative attention is simply attention. Notice your children playing nicely together and reward them with praise. Be sure each child receives adequate parental interest and quality time.

Show appreciation for who your child is, not what he does. When a child feels valuable merely for his performance, he will feel the need to prove his worth. Instead, praise your child for his God-given traits such as compassion or a tender heart. By fostering their self-esteem, children can learn to respect themselves and others.

Most parents realize children imitate what they see, so look at the example you set. Do you compete with your siblings? Or do you consistently show kindness to your brothers and sisters? By checking your actions, you can be better prepared to show your children how to emerge the best of friends following the inevitability of a little sibling conflict.