



Sibling Rivalry Parent Workshop



Let's think

- Did you grow up with siblings?
- Was there rivalry?
- Did you have conflicts with your siblings?
- What did it look like?
- What did it feel like?
- How did your parents respond to it?



Siblings

A relationship with siblings is one of the earliest and long-lasting relationships people develop.

Siblings are a child's first peer group where they learn critical social skills like how to share, how to manage conflict and how to communicate.

They did not choose each other

- Imagine if your partner came home to say they got a second partner and you are going to live together happily with the three of you.



- When you choose a friend you can choose to spend time without them. When you are in the same home with the same person, you don't get a break from them to spend some time alone.

Conflict

The way we interpret our children's interactions and conflicts matter, because it shapes how we then choose to respond to them.

Conflict is part of all long term relationships.

We need conflict, disagreement, expressing how something feels.

Not all competition is negative

- Conflict is actually building the relationship.
- Children will learn empathy and communication skills increase.
- Show children how they can compete with themselves.



Interfering

Try not to interfere as much as possible. Children need to learn to negotiate, cope with disagreement, move through big feelings, understand which battles are worth fighting.



Winding up / bickering

- When one comes to you, stay impartial, do not take sides as this will only make the other sibling more resentful towards them. This **grows** rivalry and pulls them further apart.
- Listen: “what did they do? How did that make you feel? Have you said that to them?” You can say ‘what you said/did to me makes me **feel** XXX’ What do you want to do now? Do you still want to play with them or do you want a break from them?”

- Model using words: ‘I want to keep playing with you, but not if you are mean to me.’

Some children don't want to say that to their sibling, you can offer to come with them and stay by their side and prompt them to say their thoughts. If they find it too hard to say, you can say “your brother wants to say to you xxx”



Physical fighting



- First step, calmly intervene with your body not your words. Encourage your children to feel safe with your presence.
- Words increase the sensory load and escalate the behavior.
- If you have to separate them, use simple clear language. This is not a time out, no punishment.
- Top tip: release your jaw, let go of your tongue.



Support when they are fighting

- Go to the one that is hurt, and check on them. If they both got hurt, pick one and say 'you're not in trouble I just need to check in with your brother/sister.'
- Modelling **empathy**. Encourage your child to talk about their feelings. What happened? What did they say? How did that feel?
- **Validation**. So they hurt you and you wanted them to feel as hurt as you did. I get that.
- **Learning**. You want your child to understand. I cannot let you hurt your sibling. What is another way you can communicate without hurting? Let's practice. I now need to check on your sibling.
- **Repair**. Is there something you want your sibling to know? 'I'm sorry I hit you back, I was really hurt and wanted you to feel the same.'
- **Boundary**. If you are in a similar situation you can say 'No, you are not allowed to snatch my toys'

Punishment

- Time out – children will not be thinking about what THEY did. They will be thinking about what YOU did. YOU put them there, rejection, abandonment.
- If one of them get punished, the children will learn there is one child that is bad and one that is good.
- They both need to feel you are on their side.

Scenario

For ease let's have a brother-sister combination:

- "It's not fair, you took her for ice cream whilst I was at football training. I want to with you tomorrow."
- If we just look at fairness, this would lead to you getting ice cream with him tomorrow. However, that would teach him to watch his sister like a hawk to ensure he gets the same.
- When we look at individual needs, we could validate and then say "Think about the next time you have special time with me, what would you like to do?"
- This teaches our children to look inwards, determining what he needs, instead of outwards.

How full is your cup?

Allow venting (emptying their cup) to you.



Catch them playing nicely together

- Reflect on the activities that bring them together.
- How can work as a team rather than compete with each other.
- Can they compete with themselves? Beat their own PB.

Recommended books

