

Sibling Rivalry: 3 Simple Rules

Many parents put sibling rivalry at the top of the list of *Hugely Aggravating and Repetitive Behavior Problems*. When you have more than one child acting up, your life has just become more complicated. There are more actors in the drama. How are you going to handle the situation? There is no need to make things more complex than necessary. Here are three simple and important rules you should follow.

#1. Discipline Both Kids

When children are fighting, you should discipline both kids most of the time, because usually they both helped produce the conflict. Kids are tricky; some provoke in subtle ways and others in more aggressive ways, so it is often hard to tell who started the fight—even if you are right there. For example, have you ever been driving in the car with the kids in the back and you hear, “Mom, he’s looking at me again!”? Who started that one? There’s really no way to tell. So you discipline both children, unless one is the obvious, unprovoked aggressor and you’re absolutely positive.

#2. Never Ask The World’s Two Stupidest Questions

Every parent knows what these questions are: “What happened?” and “Who started it?” What do you expect to hear, a version of George Washington’s “I cannot tell a lie”? “Yes, I started this fight and the last thirteen consecutive squabbles have also been my personal responsibility.” That kind of confession won’t happen. Instead, all you get is the kids blaming one another and yelling. There are, of course, times when you might need to ask what happened. If, for instance, you think someone might be physically injured, you would want to examine the child and find out what caused the injury. The same thing might be true with other serious or unusual cases. But for your run-of-the-mill sibling rivalry, trying to find out what happened is too often a lost cause.

#3. Don’t Expect an Older Child to Act More Mature During a Fight than a Younger Child

Even if your two kids are eleven years old and four years old, don’t say to the eleven year old, “She’s only a baby; can’t you put up with a little teasing?” That comment is the equivalent of loading the gun of the four-year-old, who will be sure to both appreciate your generosity and to take maximum advantage of it.

From 1-2-3 Magic, www.123magic.com

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