



Sibling Rivalry

The Facts

When it comes to siblings, it has been an age-old tradition that rivalry will appear at some point. From playing with the other sibling's toys to hogging the television, kids will enter the battlefield of sibling rivalry. When the enemies head to war their parents shouldn't become allies, rather they should act as the neutral country trying to enforce peace. However, in most instances a euphoric outcome is less likely; unless parents look at these helpful hints in creating a peace treaty amongst their children.

A parent should first determine the cause of sibling rivalry. Here are three root causes:

- **Family position** – Example: The younger sister wants to be like and look like her older sister.
- **Sex** – Example: The boy in the family may be jealous of the attention and affection his sister receives from the parents.
- **Age** – Example: A five-year-old will want to stay up later like his older brother.

An important fact to remember when making decisions for children is that decisions are based on need not fairness. Children quite often confuse the two and it is necessary to define the difference. Therefore, impartial decisions should result versus choosing sides and/or ignoring suitable behavior.

Eliminate Rivalry

Strategies:

- Give your child individually based goals and acknowledgements, which will steer you away from comparing one child to the other.
- Don't ignore a child's natural feeling of anger. Instead of teaching them that anger is bad, teach them how to control this natural instinct.
- Intervene a situation that causes guilt. There is an increased severity of guilt that comes with a hurtful action versus an initial mean feeling. If possible parents should try to deter their kids from acting on those feelings.
- Have your child settle their disputes amongst themselves.



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Rilvalry Resolutions for Children

Strategies for children:

- Make the situation humorous by kidding back.
- Ignore the other child's teasing.
- Confront the teaser by saying that you've have had enough of the teasing.
- Jokingly agree with the teaser.
- Ask a parent or adult in charge for help.
- Take turns in situations (i.e. choosing television programs to watch or games to play).

Consequences

If these strategies still do not mend the hostility, a parent should look at establishing some rules, in which offer consequences. In turn, these consequences may change your children's attitude and fighting nature. Here are a few examples:

- If children are fighting over a particular item, take that item away from both of them for a given time period.
- When a child calls something first (i.e. "I'm first in line.") place them last in line.
- Stop the trip and pull the car to the side of the road if children percede to fight in the car.
- Make sharing equal in regards to borrowed items
- Ignore tattletells
- Punish a child, who makes fun of their brother/sister, with the equivalant form of punishment.

Produced by

PARTNERS IN PARENTING (PIP) (800) 457-2736

A joint project of CSU Cooperative Extension and

Red Rocks Community College with funding from the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division and CSAP.

Information for this PIP TIP collected from a variety of research based resources.

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