

SIBLING RIVALRY

Research shows that it is often best to ignore your children's fights. If you cannot stay out of the fight because it is driving you crazy or one of the kids is being physically or emotionally hurt, DON'T take sides or try to play detective and figure out who started it. Rather, try one of these approaches (or a combination of them):

1. Behavioral: Give the kids a "time out" by sending them to their rooms or some other "neutral corners."
2. Empathic: Express understanding of why they are behaving that way, disapproval for the specific method they are using, and encouragement for a better solution (see Faber & Mazlish, below).

Books you may find useful...

Faber, Adele & Mazlish, Elaine. *Siblings Without Rivalry*. New York: Norton 1987. (Also available in paperback.) An excellent book full of practical advice from a humanistic point of view.

Schachter, Frances Fuchs & Stone, Richard K. *Practical Concerns About Siblings: Bridging the Research-Practice Gap*. New York: Haworth Press, 1987. Summaries of research, written for professionals but may be interesting to parents who want to understand more about these issues.

Blume, Judy. *The Pain and the Great One*. New York: Bradbury Press, 1974. (Also available in paperback.) A fictional account written for children with humor and insight. Highly recommended.

Professional help may be needed when one of the following situations is occurring:

1. One or more children show other behavioral difficulties, such as fighting with peers outside of the family or behavior problems in school.
2. There is significant marital discord and the children's fights reflect their allegiance with respective parents.
3. A parent finds it difficult to love or appreciate one child.

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