



Sibling Rivalry



How can I help my children get along with each other?

Sibling rivalry is as old as the world's first two brothers, Cain and Abel. Each family is different, but here are a few solid principles to remember.

Don't show favoritism or compare them. Isaac favored Esau while Rebekah favored Jacob and it caused serious sibling rivalry (Genesis 25:27, 28). Recognize and praise each one for their individual strengths.

Teach them to watch their words. Brothers (siblings/families) can sometimes get lax in the words said to one another. Call a family meeting and talk about what words are permitted and which aren't. "I don't like what you are doing" might be permitted; "I hate you" is not. Make sure that everyone contributes and decides on what is acceptable and what is not. Use Ephesians 4:29-31 as a guide.

To reinforce this concept: Give each person a roll of quarters (or dimes or nickels). Announce that every time they say unkind words, they must forfeit a quarter (coin). At the end of the week, the money they have left is theirs to keep or spend. Read Ephesians 4:32 together.

Teach them negotiating skills. When kids have a spat with one another, ask them to stand on opposite sides of the room facing each other. Set the timer for two minutes and ask one to share his side of the story while the other listens without interrupting. Set the timer again and allow the other to share his side with no interruptions. Then ask, "How can we solve this?" Reach an agreement and decide to forgive. Ask each child to take a step toward the other and say one good thing about the other (a compliment or something he enjoys doing with the other) until they are face to face and can shake hands or embrace. Brotherly love is about forgiving and letting the hurt go (1 Peter 4:8).

Be creative with solutions. When arguing or fighting, give them a task to complete together (one example is washing your patio doors with one child on each side). Institute a "no fighting in the house" rule and send them outside – even when it's cold – if they want to fight (it usually shuts down the fighting pretty quickly).





Declare a Love Your Family Day. Each family member should write their name on a slip of paper and throw them in a bag. Ask each one to draw a name, but not let anyone see it. The name they drew is the person they must secretly show love to the **WHOLE** day. (Coach the younger ones if they need ideas.) At the end of the day, see if kids can guess their “secret admirer.” Enjoy a treat together to celebrate a good day of loving!

Pray for them to love one another.

