

Disagreements & fallout between siblings, friends, family members (children/young people)

Last week the article was about disharmony and conflict in the family home given that many of us are spending 24x7 at home with our nearest and dearest. This article has a similar flavour but with a twist to looking at this from a younger person's perspective, namely rivalry or fall-outs between children.

For kids/young people:

It's not easy – being stuck at home, without school/college, friends, hobbies and that can mean things can get more intense. This includes how you are with your brother/sister/cousin/friends etc. This is aimed to give you some ideas about how you could handle or respond to things differently.



Which buttons are being pushed?

Give yourself time and space to work out why you feel so cross, upset, sad - then talk to your family to work out how you can all help resolve this



Make time - Split your time so you've got space just for you and what you want/like to do and also space to share yourself with others - doing what *they want* to do



Choosing your battles - You can't win them all, work out what is **most** important to you and how you can give and take so everyone feels satisfied with the outcome



Get your voice heard - Angry voices & unkind words/actions don't often get the right attention. Think about what you want to say & how to say it to get the best response



Walk away - Take time out to deal with your feelings **before** you explode. If you're angry do some quick activity to get rid of that energy. Go back & talk when you're calmer



Think Team! - this is a crazy time for everyone, everybody feels a bit strange right now, **think care**, **think team**, **think positive** - can you be the **problem solver** in your family

Note to Parents¹:

Some of these suggestions might not sit well with you, or be things that you agree with. They're shared as opportunities of food for thought or a chance to consider different tactics – in the end, do what you feel is right for your family and your parenting values 😊

It is not your job, nor do you have the power to, make your kids love each other and get along. That is something they need to figure out. Trying to control the sibling relationship often results in more, not less, rivalry.

It is not your job to solve your children's conflicts. If you put yourself in the position of fixing everything, your kids will constantly come to you to be the referee, which means they won't learn how to work things out on their own or together. Model to them how to positively work through conflict and come out the other side still friends. Disagreements don't have to lead to grudges.

¹ Referencing some info taken from Psychology Today – Claire Lerner's article on sibling rivalry

Coronavirus – Tips to support mental health & wellbeing #5 – 17th April 2020

What you can control are the ground rules to keep kids safe. Let them know that you expect them to sort out how to play/be together. They need to know that your role is about keeping them safe emotionally and physically. Make sure they know you won't allow them to be harmful with words or actions but that they have to find solutions to their disagreements.

Avoid being a referee. Taking sides, or protecting one child from another, plays right into and escalates the rivalry. It also creates a dynamic where one child is the “aggressor” and the other the “victim”. Empower your children to hold their own ‘meeting’ for 5 minutes where they talk calmly about how they are going to sort out the problem and then tell you what their solution is. *(It might be that they need a 10-minute break before this meeting in order to let go of strong emotions).*

Don't fall into the bottomless pit of trying to work out what happened. The “he said, she said” black hole. Instead, listen to each child's perspective. Then paraphrase what they share instead of correcting or fixing: “It's hard for you when your sister does xyz ...” “You thought he was finished playing with ...” When you restate each child's experiences without judgment, it helps them put themselves in the other's shoes.

Institute “pause-and-problem-solve.” Explain to your kids that when they are having a hard time, you will help them by using a handy tool called, “pause-and-problem-solve.” When you hear unkind words or see people using their body in harmful ways, you will clearly announce, “Pause, people” to cue them to freeze. Then you will name the problem: “I see you are having a hard time sharing xyz.” Or, “You have different ideas for how to do xyz.” Ask for their ideas. Suggest other options if none of theirs are viable, but be clear that you are not going to solve the problem for them. You are just helping them think through the situation and they choose their response.

We hope you can find something useful and helpful in this week's article. Remember - this situation won't last forever, stay home, look after one another and keep safe.

Tash, Catherine, Rach, Frankie and Sarah x