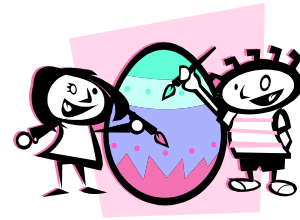


Parent Guidance Workshops

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SOME THOUGHTS ON SOLVING SIBLING DILEMMAS:

Distinguish between feelings and behavior. All feelings are permitted (*you don't have to love your sister, you can wish she'd never been born*), but actions must be limited (*no hurting, kicking, biting*).

Understand the reasons for sibling rivalry. Each one of us--adult or child--wants to be loved uniquely, not equally. Most of us would not be eager to share our spouse with someone younger or cuter!

Don't intervene UNLESS SOMEONE IS GETTING HURT. TRY whenever possible, to let them work out their disputes by themselves. When you must intervene, do it neutrally and evenhandedly, without accusing (*blaming*) one child and absolving the other. Make a strong brief statement, such as "There will be no hurting." or "I will not let one child I love hurt another." or "You have a choice. Either you can settle it yourselves, or if I have to intervene, you'll both be punished." However, if they are so angry or out of control that they need to be separated, a time out is warranted.

Avoid asking "WHO STARTED IT?" That question assumes that one child is guilty and the other one is innocent. "There's no such thing as an innocent sibling" is generally a good rule of thumb, unless the younger one is under 18 months and can't fend for himself.

Remember that kids often ENJOY fighting. It's not boring. And when or if you've got a moment's peace, it's a great way to get you off the phone or away from what you're doing so you can focus on them!

Encourage sharing, but realize that it's hard to do. It goes against nature, because it often means getting less. When you have to share your M&Ms you get fewer for yourself!

Total fairness is impossible. No matter how much you strive for fairness, kids may still say "it's not fair". So treat them according to their needs, not the same. For instance, if one has a birthday, she's the one entitled to receive presents.

Tattling, should not be permitted, since it's usually to get one's sibling in trouble. However, if your child comes to you because his sister or brother is hurt or in need of help, that's an exception to the rule.

And don't forget to notice when they are NOT fighting.

Nancy Samalin's third book, LOVING EACH ONE BEST: A Caring & Practical Approach to Raising Siblings, explores these ideas more fully. (Bantam, 1996)