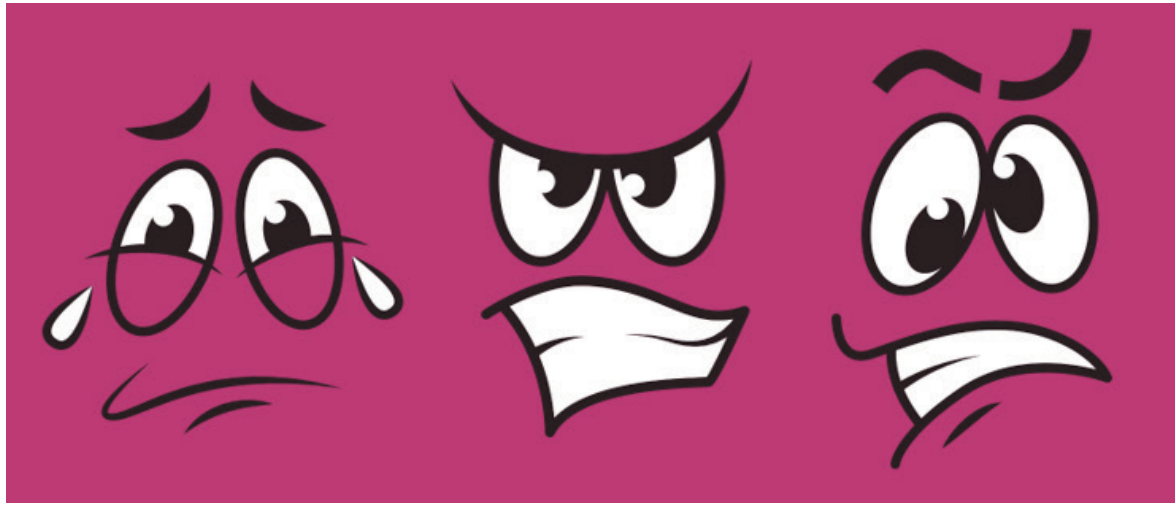


Sibling Quarrels during Coronavirus Quarantine

Following the national effort to defeat the coronavirus, many families find themselves in house quarantine. Family members are forced to spend time together, and crowdedness along with a tense atmosphere, can greatly increase the frequency and intensity of quarrels among siblings. How can you help resolve and lessen the fighting?



Why does it happen?

When siblings spend so much time together indoor it increases the feeling of stress and tension at home. Children often quarrel when they feel something is unfair, or when they see things from a different perspective. They might quarrel from boredom, or when competing for parental attention. In adolescence, sibling quarrels may culminate as part of the developmental process in which they establish autonomy and independence.

During this period, when the atmosphere in the house immediately affects each member of the family, you may feel pressured to stop the quarrels in order to restore peace. It's important to remember and understand that these "fights" have a useful purpose: they are valuable opportunities to learn how to contact to their peer group. The problem-solving skills learned during the fighting will help them learn to settle disputes, deal with different opinions, express their needs, compromise, and even apologize. When handled properly, quarrels will help children grow to be better partners, friends, and employees.

How to respond?

Contrary to the impulse that may rise as the children begin to quarrel, it is not always advisable to hurry and get involved. When you allow your children to solve the quarrels themselves, you help them to develop important life skills. Too much parental attention to fights can encourage similar behavior in the future. It is worthwhile, however, to keep an eye on things. When the children communicate with each other or manage to solve the problem themselves, it strengthens them. If necessary, you can offer tips and thus direct the negotiations between them. Understand what they are arguing about and guide them to think together about the solution that takes everyone's needs into account. Offer other ideas as soon as you see that they have trouble agreeing on the problem. It is important to remind them in advance of the rules for managing the argument in a positive manner, for example, say, "Do you remember that we all talk nicely to each other?"

When to intervene?

When the quarrel slides into violent and abusive behavior, or to vicious statements and curses, the fight must be interrupted immediately. In this situation you can use the following steps:

1. Intervene and separate them before crying begins. Each can be sent to separate rooms in order to relax. If the children start arguing who is to blame, make it clear that when there is a quarrel, both parties are responsible for it.
2. Try to keep your atmosphere calm and control your own emotions. An unregulated response on your part can make things worse. When it's hard to stay in control, try to count to ten before you act. If that doesn't help, ask another adult to handle the fight and stay away for a short break.
3. Set a time later for a discussion about what happened. Immediately after the fight, the children are too upset and unable to discuss the issue. It is important to remember to have the conversation to help children solve their problems constructively.
4. Use short and immediate results and decide what the outcome of the quarrel will be: Make sure that none of the children receive the object they want until they find a solution, postpone planned activity after relaxing or use a timeout.

How to talk about the fight?

- Make sure the children calm down before starting the conversation, and they are able to talk reasonably.
- Ask your children to listen to each other and give everyone the opportunity to express their side of the story. Help them identify what the fight is about instead of focusing on who started it.
- Be careful not to side with any of the children.
- Help them to make sure their expectations are reasonable, and offer possible solutions to the problem. You can also offer your own solutions.
- Think together about the suggested solutions, encourage the children to think about the advantages and disadvantages of the various solutions.
- Encourage them to agree on a solution that is acceptable to all parties. If they were unsuccessful, try to talk about it again later, and in the meantime ask them to think about additional ideas.
- Make sure the resulting solution is fair to both parties and make sure it is actually happening.

What can be done to reduce the frequency of quarrels?

You can help calm the atmosphere and reduce the tension and friction between the children by addressing several issues:

Personal attention for each child

Make sure you give each child personal attention and at the same time indulge everyone with hugs, smiles and compliments, so that none of them feel compelled to compete for your attention. You should make sure that each child has their own personal space and a drawer for private belongings. It is important that the child engages in activities without the other siblings interfering with them and try to create shared, even if short, quality time with each and every one of them individually.

Fairness

Be fair to all children and avoid discrimination or comparisons between siblings. There is no need to behave in the same way with everyone - for each child, his or her own age-specific needs and characteristics. Don't argue with them about what's fair - make it clear that the age differences between them create differences in their rights and obligations. However, it is important to maintain equality so that children feel treated fairly, rather than discriminated against or blamed regularly.

Positive attention

Give the children positive feedback when they behave well, make it clear what behavior you loved and explicitly reinforce it. This will increase the chances of the recurring of these behaviors in the future, and teach them that they can gain your attention through positive behavior.

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