

The Parent's Corner

✂️ We're in Your Corner ✂️

Should I get involved? That is the question on many parents' minds when it comes to **sibling rivalry**. With the holiday season fast approaching, we have *a lot* of family time coming up—and maybe some arguing and power struggles between siblings awaits us. As parents, we hope our kids will be built-in best friends, but as kids grow up, they can be anything but! We'd like to give a different perspective on why these squabbles could be happening, and how to approach them when they do.

Remember, **all behavior is communication**. It's hard enough for kids to get along with friends their age, let alone an older or younger sibling. Now you have a recipe for a developmental miscommunication at its best. Picture this: your 5-year-old is trying to tell your 9-year-old something but doesn't know how to make their point productively. So they revert to using mean and blaming words because they feel frustrated, not only with the situation but also with their inability to express themselves. Your 9-year-old is angry and irritated by your 5-year-old and wants them to get lost! Here it comes...*"MOMMMMM!"* While this *seems* like a rivalry, it is actually a **skill deficit**, where kids in different social spaces are trying to communicate and get along. They are bound to have difficulty doing so. This is where we come in—the adult, the model of behavior, the teacher, the calm in the storm. If you intervene by **teaching to the skills that they are missing**, you will find that problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills are attainable by all age groups! Here's a good place to start:

- 1) **Cool off.** This should go for everyone. Taking the time to cool down, take a break, chill out! Times of high emotion are not the time to instill wisdom. As the parent, you may have to instigate a break for both parties and wait until things settle down before continuing the conversation.
- 2) **Listen.** Ask your children (separately) to explain what's happening from their perspective. This can give you a lot of information to work with. *"I notice you want to play with your brother, but you're calling him names, and I don't know why. Can you help me understand?"*
- 3) **Teach.** The reality is that kids don't have the skills unless they learn the skills. Teach them to take turns explaining why they are upset. Teach them to use "I messages" instead of blaming words. "I feel _____, when you _____. Can you please _____." These simple skills can go a long way.
- 4) **Talk Together.** Call it what you will, but a family meeting can go a long way, once you have all the information about the problem from each sibling. Talking it out with your help facilitating the conversation can help your children work through problem-solving strategies and peaceful communication techniques.

With the holidays right around the corner, helping your kids work through squabbles can help make family time a peaceful time!

~If you continue to have concerns, contact your school counselor to make a plan for a success—they're full of ideas, and are always in your corner!~