

HER SCOOP IS BIGGER THAN MY SCOOP! Does Sibling Rivalry Ever End?

Hey Deb,

How do I stop sibling rivalry? My kids fight over everything...whose glass is fuller, who got the extra scoop of ice cream, who got the extra bedtime song. Help!

Signed Mom Steeped in Sibling Strife

Dear Mom Steeped in Sibling Strife,

Wait. You sing bedtime songs? You have more than one child and you still manage to sing bedtime songs?!! Where do you live? Stepford? Well, thank goodness your kids fight or I'd be deeply concerned. So, you want to know how to stop sibling rivalry. Truth is, you can't, you won't, you don't. It all began way back when with Adam and Eve's kids, Cain and Abel. If I recall correctly, Cain was jealous because Abel had a bigger fig leaf and the next thing you know, Abel's dead!

Sibling rivalry is as old as time. At first we compare ice cream scoops, birthday presents and report cards, later it's jobs, salaries, houses and spouses. Where does this competition come from? In nature, limited resources are what compel animals to compete. Did you know a baby eaglet may push its own brothers and sisters out of the nest in order to keep all the food? And in the shark family, the biggest baby shark sometimes solves the limited food problem by simply eating his brothers and sisters! So let's be grateful for a bit of bickering.

However, in your situation as in most families, the limited resource is not food, but the time, attention and love two parents can give their two, three, four, five children or more. The more children, the more this limited resource must be divided, the greater the competition, the more sibling rivalry.

As long as no one draws blood, or swears like my Aunt Siegfried, stay out of it. Don't try and figure out who's at fault. If it gets to where you can't stand it, do what I do. Whether snow, rain, sleet or hail, I push the siblings outside and lock the door. They're not allowed back inside until they stop bickering.

Now if this seems too harsh for a mom who still sings nightly lullabies, another method you might try, although I can't guarantee it will work, is to sit them in a talking chair and a listening chair. The sibling in the talking chair begins with, "I'm upset because . . . The sibling in the listening chair is not allowed to interrupt, but must simply listen. Then they switch places and the other sibling gets his or her turn in the talking chair. They are not allowed out of the chairs until they come to a resolution on their own.

SLIGHTLY OFF

by Deb DiSandro

Spending time alone with each child may also help alleviate some rivalry. If possible, take one child to the store while the other child stays home with dad or a babysitter. If an older child has a later bedtime, spend some time playing a game or watching a favorite television program, or if it was my kid, eating big bowls of Double Chocolate Caramel Fudge Tracks ice cream. Of course, I always make sure my bowl is bigger.

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