

Cooling down sibling rivalries when they heat up

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(HealthDay)—Sibling rivalry—the jealousy and competition between

your children—can start even before baby number two is born, according to experts at the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital of Michigan Medicine.

How siblings relate to each other and to parents can change as they go through the stages of childhood. Toddlers starting to assert themselves may squawk when a [sibling](#) grabs one of their toys. Elementary school kids who have learned about sharing may act out if they think a younger sibling—such as a newborn—is getting a greater share of attention than they are. Teens longing for independence may resent having to babysit for a sibling and show displeasure by snubbing the child or mom and dad.

To tamp down the misbehaviors of [sibling rivalry](#), give each child one-on-one attention that's meaningful to him or her. That could be playing a [board game](#) with one and curling up to watch a movie with another. It's also important to have quality [family](#) time, like eating dinner together and getting out for some exercise.

Explain that there are times when one child needs more attention, like when sick or working on a big school project. If conflicts get out of hand, call a family meeting and allow everyone to express themselves. This gives even the littlest voice a chance to be heard and be part of the solution.

Tips to create a family meeting agenda include:

- Set ground rules such as no yelling or interruptions.
- Offer each family member the chance to share feelings and suggest solutions.
- When one person talks, the others must listen.
- Give each [child](#) a role in implementing the solution.

These talks can help stop fights and teach kids valuable life skills for resolving conflicts as adults.

More information: The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital has more guidelines for [diffusing sibling rivalry](#), including suggested readings for kids and parents alike.

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