



## Parenting Tip

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### When Addressing Sibling Conflict, Discipline Kids Separately

One of the most challenging aspects of family life is sibling conflict. You want your children to have close relationships but differing personalities, competitiveness, and immaturity often get in the way.

Conflict between brothers and sisters is a child's first class in relationship school. Your home is the classroom, you are the teacher, and a healthy plan for working on conflict is the curriculum. Each conflict situation becomes an opportunity for teaching children how to relate more effectively.

One of the most important strategies for addressing sibling conflict is to discipline the children separately, not together. Kids have an amazing way of deflecting discipline when they're together.

When two children are fighting, call one out of the room and talk about how to deal with the conflict. Some parents feel like they must stop everything and administer consequences to both kids in order to parent effectively. A better response is to train them in the moment. By removing just one of the kids you're able to help that child develop a plan for the situation. When your son complains that you're only disciplining him and not his sister, explain to him that he and his sister need help in different ways, and right now you're helping him.

Teach children how to confront, ignore, negotiate, compromise, talk about problems, and be peacemakers. And when they've reached a point of frustration, rather than lash out, they need to get help, typically from you. Counsel the child and then send him or her back into the situation to try again. You may call the same child out of an activity five or ten times in an hour to continue to point out the change that needs to take place. Help children know what right actions are appropriate, and as long as they're willing to try to do the right thing, send them back into the situation to practice. If necessary, call the second child out and give helpful suggestions to that child as well.

Recognizing that sibling conflict is an opportunity for relationship training gives the conflict a whole new perspective. As you listen to your children's interaction you'll be able to identify specific skills they need, buttons that are easily pushed, and relating weaknesses that need to be addressed.

*This parenting tip is from Chapter 26 in our NEW RELEASE book, [The Christian Parenting Handbook](#) by Dr Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN. Find 50 practical strategies to equip yourself as a parent.*

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