

**"Indians are either on the warpath or smoking the peace pipe." Siblings can do both."
*Kurt Tucholsky***



Fights between siblings are not a new thing in our families. There are numerous stories among siblings rivalry in the history, like Cain and Abel from the Bible, the story of Romulus and Remus in ancient Rome, the story of Cleopatra and her brother, some of us know the story of the Dassler brothers (Adidas and Puma), or those who follow up sports, nowadays at the tennis court between Serena and Venus Williams. Sibling rivalry is a common problem in every family.

The relationships between siblings are intense, like love and hate, devotion and rivalry. Fighting and disagreements, aggression and competitiveness are manifested in many of their activities. The expression of these difficult emotional states is also an important way of interacting with each other. Through these (unpleasant for us parents) fights, no matter how paradoxical, the brothers communicate emotionally or physically, at the same time, they learn to manage their mental tension, to negotiate their desires, to claim their rights, to coexist with others and with all the possible frustrations. It is a precious "school" of social learning where they learn the necessary skills for their lives.

However, they need our help to learn to handle this conflict, and we can't expect them to know how to solve it but we will come later to this.

Every child has his place in the family from the moment of the birth, the "first-born", the "newborn", then probably a "third-born" will come and will re-settle the order in the family, the "sensible one," the "strong-willed one," and many others.

Siblings are usually very different and therefore need parents who respond differently to their diversity. What people used to say, that you like all children the same and treat them all the same, it is only a myth.

Why are siblings having clashes?

The feelings of unfairness, injustice, and sibling jealousy become the trigger for the fights.

Is Jealousy something "bad"? Should we avoid this feeling?

Jealousy is a feeling someone has in a situation when he/she thinks that someone else is more loved or superior to him.

It is a perfectly normal feeling of reaction. The child can not imagine sharing the love of his parents.

Jealousy is essential for our self-image, but also for our acceptance of ourselves. The brother or sister plays a vital role in making the personality of the child. The "other" allows each child to better define themselves by identifying difference and similarity.

No child of the family escapes the feelings of jealousy, no matter what his or her position is.

We parents, have to remember that jealousy is a normal feeling of reaction and that is our responsibility to help the kids to learn how to manage these feelings.

But many things also depend on factors that mother and father can not change. About the sex and the age difference. As a rule, the smaller the age difference, the higher the potential for conflict. Brothers who were born at close intervals often compete with each other. Between the ages of three and five, it is usually about the love and recognition of the mother. Research shows that sisters share more close relationship, but this doesn't mean that they don't have fights. Its only that their fights aren't so violent as boys. At the same time, the role model function of the older child is often strong for the younger among same-sex siblings. Laurie Kramer, professor of applied family studies at the University of Illinois and prominent researcher in the field of family studies, says that a teenager girl will look at what her older sister doing more than what her mom does.

The relationship between mixed-gender siblings is usually more relaxed. Boys and girls are less likely to get in each other's way, as they often have different interests and role models like in the constellation "big sister-little brother". The most harmonious experience is the combination of a big brother, a little sister with a three to four year age difference. The boy can and may live out his masculine qualities as a big brother. The girl fits well in her femi-

nine features in the role of the little sister. Both find the recognition of the parents because they correspond to the expected role stereotypes.¹

Here are some practical suggestions about how to deal with the siblings rivalry:

- Avoid comparisons and accept the diversity of your children!
- Try to have a balance and have a separate time for all the children of the family. Let the newborn sometimes with grandparents/babysitter. In this way, you can spend your free time with the other children.
 - The firstborn child has not to "grow up" quickly. Let him/her live like a child of his age. The firstborn can take on more tasks if ready but then he should enjoy more privileges and more freedom.
 - It is good when each child can have his own games, his own room (if it is possible, if not a child can own a drawer of his own). Brothers do not have to share everything and the same toys.
 - Have clarity in the communication in the family (who is talking and when, no one is interrupted, etc). The arrangement of the seats in the car and at the table, who gets a gift when one of the children celebrates (once a year can be only the birthday child the "king" of the day!), who's favourite food comes on which day, arrange the sports events of the children alternatively.
 - don't even start to find out of "who started" and "who is to blame". It can not always be the older or always the little one. Set clear rules that will prevent aggressive behaviour between them.
 - Interfere only where absolutely necessary AND here again, set ground rules, regarding your values and how you expect your children to treat each other. We can't influence our children emotions and feelings but we can influence more or less their behaviour.

The last but most important is to overcome the idyllic image of the family, where everyone is always loved and united!!!

¹<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/7014824/Siblings-as-important-as-parents-in-childs-behaviour.html>