

Sibling Relationships



The good. The bad. And the...

Ingredients for ALL good relationships

- good communication
- respect
- trust
- flexibility
- emotional connection
- asserting needs
- positive regard
- boundaries
- empathy
- ability to problem-solve

Unique to siblings

- locked in for life
- family roles
- shared genetics
- impact of birth order
- competition for parents & resources
- together during developmental progression (milestones & identity formation)
- organize together to topple parental dictatorship

Did you know?

- Most sib relationships end up fine. 66% of adults report good sib relations. Better with time—80% of 60 year olds report close ties.
- Partners for life. Really—first & longest relationship. Outlasts parent-child.
- Where relational skills are honed & tested.
- Typically spend more time with sibs than parents, teachers, friends or alone.
- Bonds strengthen in response to family stress (mad parent).

fun facts con't.

- Sibs fight a lot! Kids 3-7 years have 3.5 conflicts per hour. Younger—1 every 10 min.
 - 70% of parents report a preference for one kid. Most don't tell, but kids often know :o
 - Birth order has some influence:
 - 1st borns have 3 point IQ advantage (1 full school year) over sibs. From 1:1 parent time, & teaching sibs.
 - 1st born common traits: goal setting, achievement, responsibility, perfectionism, rule keeping.
- * due to parents' direct expectations and most parental feedback.

fun facts con't.

- Younger sibs traits: extroverted, funny, lighthearted, creative, flexible—but also more manipulative and rebellious. All tactics contribute to get parental attention and work around older sib(s).
- Birth order 'personality' enacted at home. Kid can be very different out in the world.
- Having 3 or more sibs makes you 1" shorter! (fewer resources: time, \$, parental attention, etc).

Influences on sib relations

Temperament

- Sensitivity
- Persistence
- Adaptability
- Impulse Control
- Intensity
- Focus
- Activity Level

Influences on sib relations

Developmental Period

- 0-2 yrs. Trust, security, attachment & the sensory world.
- 3-5 yrs. Language, planning, cause-effect, ideas, physical skills, POWER!! (autonomy).
- 5-10 yrs. Rational & abstract thinking, confidence, problem-solving, social skills, individual interests (sports, art, etc.).

Influences on sib relations

Family dynamics and roles

- Parents' partnering skills. How parents handle conflict, problem-solve, express emotions, work as a team, etc.
- How parents handle stress i.e. calm or reactive parenting.
- Structure and consistency. Clear rules & routines? Structure creates safety and predictability.
- Parental power. Can parents balance *empathy* and *authority*?

Influences on sib relations

Family Roles- Based on age, temperament and family need.

Parent roles:

- Disciplinarian
- Pushover
- Soother
- Organizer
- Feelings parent
- Adventurer

Kids Roles:

- Good kid
- Clown/distractor
- Victim/helpless
- Trouble maker
- Peacemaker
- Little adult/caretaker

Putting it all together

Individual traits (temperament, birth order, etc.)

+

Developmental level (age, abilities, limitations etc.)

+

Family Dynamics (parenting, structure, family roles, etc.)

=

your child's disposition toward siblings.

Building good sib relations

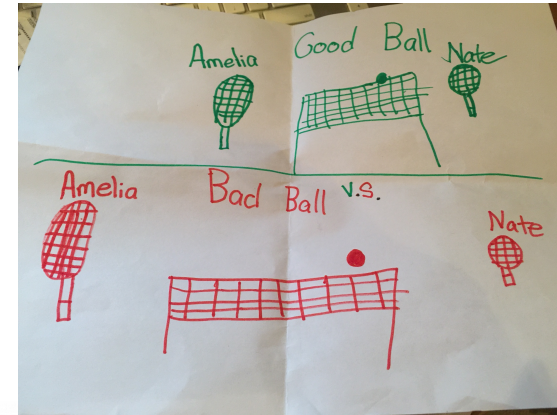
- Enough structure: organize family life with routines and clear expectations.
- Clear and enforced family rules. Respect for all.
- Family meetings. Everyone has a voice.
- Good boundaries (respect everyone's ideas, personal space, flexible roles, general fairness).
- Decrease over-focus on 'the other' (creates jealousy).
- Own toys & share (family) toys.

Building good sib relations

- Don't referee. Instead teach the 2-step plan:
Step 1: Assert. Step 2: Get help.
- Get kids together to talk about feelings. Validate their feelings.
- Then practice joint problem-solving (flexible solutions).
- Value cooperation over competition.
- Have kids work together (jobs, projects, problem-solving).

Building good sib relations

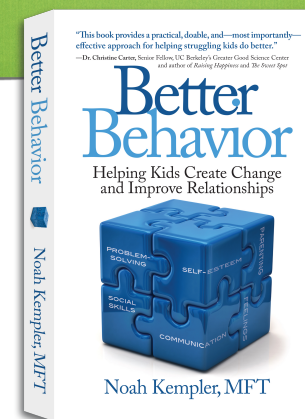
Teach your kids about retaliation and negative cycles.



Building good sib relations

- Accept conflict and encourage kindness.
- Tame the blame. Teach responsibility for each's part.
- Help your kids 'add positive' through words and deeds.
- Help kids work on skills like: flexibility, compromise, communication of feelings, problem-solving, calm down breaks, etc.
- Get help if too much conflict or too long.

Resources



Visit betterbehaviorblog.com for resources and to get *"Promoting Good Sibling Relationships"* handout. And don't forget to sign up for the BLOG!