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Comfort Play  
& Teach:

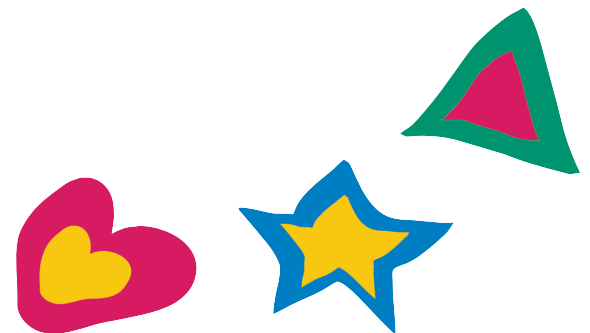
A Positive Approach to Parenting™

Every Day

## Promoting Sibling Harmony during the Summer Holidays

Summer is a busy time, and each child can have different ideas about what he or she wants to do. One child may want to go swimming and another might want to spend an afternoon painting. For parents who have more than one child and are looking for ways to ensure that siblings can enjoy each other's interests, and still be able to pursue their own, here are some suggestions for making your family's summer time, **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time.

1. Talk to your children about what they want to do and then tell them the days and times that it is possible to follow through with their wishes. One morning could be devoted to enjoying a special craft activity and another afternoon could be when you have a picnic in the park together. Listening to your children and finding ways to involve them in making plans may help to increase their enjoyment of the activities and enable them to practice skills like co-operating and turn-taking.
2. Try to provide each child with some special one-to-one time. This shows your children that you value their unique interests and that it is important to you to make time to learn about what each of them likes to do.
3. Suggest some ideas to your children that you think they would both enjoy, for example, an afternoon playing at a neighbourhood park, a puppet show at the local library, or a visit from a special family member. Providing some choices will encourage your children to consider new possibilities for enjoying their summer and to learn to make decisions together.





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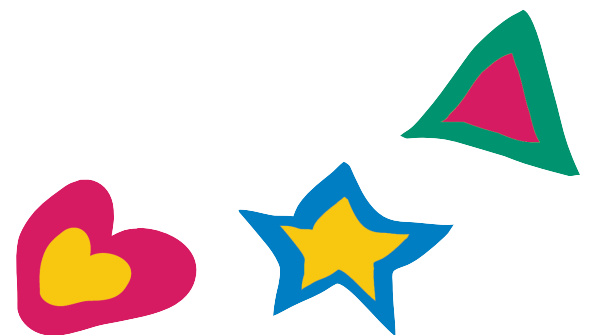


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4. Encourage your children to teach you and each other how to do a special activity. Being able to demonstrate skills like cutting paper, shaping playdough, waving scarves to music, or playing a game will foster pride in their abilities and your children the chance to be both a leader and a listener.
5. Play co-operative games together such as *Beach Ball Balancing Game* and *Ring Around the Rosie*. This will encourage your children to focus on just enjoying a game they are playing rather than on who the winner is. Co-operative games encourage turn-taking, sharing and playing for pleasure.
6. When conflict does arise, consider different coping strategies. In some instances, young children can be provided with appropriate choices between one activity and another. Other times, it may be necessary to redirect a child to a different activity, if he or she is finding it challenging to play co-operatively. Let children know that hurting each other is not acceptable, and that it is important for them to try to solve the problem by talking or by asking a grown-up for help, if needed.





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**Q:** Siblings: How do I manage their rivalry?

**A:** Sibling rivalry refers to fighting, squabbling and jealousy between brothers and sisters, and seems to be based on the fact that each child would ideally like to have the parent's exclusive attention and therefore resents the sibling's presence. As a result, if there is more than one child in a family, sibling rivalry is almost inevitable. If children are less than three years apart in age, rivalry is likely to be most intense. However, siblings can learn to get along and usually will stand up for each other if other children try to hurt their brother or sister. **It is important to remember that, next to parents, early relationships with siblings are usually our most important relationships and can significantly affect how we feel about ourselves.**

### Dealing With Fights and Squabbles Between Siblings

Although it's natural for children in families to compete for attention, and to argue or even hit each other, it can be annoying, and even dangerous.

Here are some suggestions for reducing sibling fighting:

- **Avoid becoming involved in every argument between siblings.** Try not to become a constant referee and hover over your children's play. However, ensure that no child is constantly being teased, put down or physically hurt by a sibling.
- **Avoid comparing siblings.** In particular, try not to say that one child is better in some way than the other. Do not label children (for example, "the smart one" or "the shy one"). These comparisons not only set up rivalries, but can also become self-fulfilling prophecies.





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- **Develop a general “no violence” rule in your home**, which also applies to sibling fights. Your children will soon learn that hurting a sibling is not tolerated!
- **Don’t expect sibling rivalry only after a baby is born.** It often doesn’t occur until the new baby is about six months old, awake for much of the day and more of a little person.
- **Understand that it won’t always be possible to give everything equally**, and explain to your children that sometimes it will be their turn to get something and sometimes it won’t. Being fair to each of your children and meeting their needs, does not mean everything is always equal.
- **Try to have one-on-one time with each child individually**, as it makes a child feel very special to be the only one around sometimes.
- **When fighting does occur, often it is best to separate the children.** However, if you are feeling up to it and the fighting hasn’t escalated too much, it can be a great opportunity to teach children about conflict resolution and problem-solving. You can do this by asking each child for his point of view of what happened, and then asking for ideas on how to resolve the situation. Although the children may suggest some crazy solutions, you will be surprised how they will also suggest some innovative ones.
- **Look carefully at how you deal with disagreements with your partner and your children when one arises.** Do you solve the problem heatedly, yet peacefully, swearing and walking out, hitting, ignoring (coming to no conclusion) or taking deep breaths and trying to talk it out? This gives children a pattern to follow.





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- **When they fight, don't take sides**, especially if you weren't there to see exactly what happened. Have them spend a few minutes away from each other so they can calm down, then ask them to return so you can all talk about it together.
- **Encourage your children to talk about their feelings with each other** and to try to settle their differences with words, not actions. Explain how important it is to listen to each other.
- **Avoid taking on the job of referee** – kids have to learn to resolve disagreements themselves, more and more as they get older. When you feel your children are ready, stay close by in case they need you, but tell them that you think they can work out the disagreement on their own.
- **Remember that some fighting is fun for children, and there is no reason for you to intervene at those times.**





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**Q:** *Siblings: How can I help my child adjust to a new baby?*

**A:** It can sometimes be hard for older children to handle the arrival of a new baby. They may feel jealous or displaced. You may even find that your child starts to act younger than his age to gain more attention.

Here are some ways to try to ensure your older child feels loved once there's a new baby on the scene:

- **Before your new baby is born, include your older child in plans for the new baby**, such as setting up the new sleeping space and preparing the baby's toys and clothes.
- **After your new baby is born, give your older child special responsibilities** to help her feel involved. Let older children hold the baby safely.
- **Emphasize your child's new role** as a big brother or sister – and how important that is.
- **Get your older child a baby doll**, complete with bottle and clothes, so he can imitate you.
- **Read books together** – mom, dad, baby, older child, grandparent, extended family and treasured friend. Have each person choose their favourite book, and choose one for the baby. If your older child is reading, let him read what he can.
- **Let your older child build a relationship with the baby.** Help her notice when the baby responds to a voice, silly faces and cuddling.





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- **Try to spend some uninterrupted time with your older child** – maybe doing her favourite activity together, or just snuggling and talking. Remember, it doesn't have to be a long time, but it has to be just for her.
- **Let your older child hear you tell others what a help he is with the new baby.** But be careful that this is not the only thing that you ever compliment him on.
- **Prepare your partner** for the fact that, since you will be kept busy with the baby, he or she will need to be more available to your older child.
- **Ask your children's grandparents or other relatives and friends to spend some special time with your older child.**

For more information visit [www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)

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