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home alone

HOME ALONE PLAN
FOR PARENTS

Getting along with others

Conflict with siblings and friends is a normal part of development. During the middle years, most children tend to see things in "black and white," thinking themselves right and the other person wrong. They find it hard to understand that most conflicts arise from different points of view. Not until adolescence do most children fully appreciate that the best solutions are ones where both people agree.

Some conflict can be beneficial to children's development. Through disputes, children become more aware of the needs and rights of others. They learn to assert themselves, develop problem-solving skills, and gain independence.

Guidelines to help children get along with others

- Set clear family rules.
- Give each child plenty of individual attention to lessen competition.
- Help children develop good communication skills. Encourage them to listen well and share feelings with others in a respectful way.
- Teach children a variety of acceptable ways to resolve conflict. Some examples are taking turns, splitting the difference, or making a deal.
- Let children solve some problems on their own, if they can do so safely.
- Practice working through conflict situations with children. In situations where children constantly argue, work out advance plans to prevent conflict.
- Try to plan some separate activities for each child to reduce time together.

It may take some time for your children to use new ways to resolve problems, but have patience and continue to encourage them. Sibling conflict can be an opportunity to teach children how to get along with others who are different from them.

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Think up solutions

Read through each of the following situations. Then think of as many solutions as you can. Write down the solutions, and discuss each one. Which solution would most likely end the disagreement?

Situations

1. You are watching your favorite TV program. Your sister comes in, takes the remote, and changes the channel.
2. You and your brother usually take turns taking out the garbage. You think it is his turn to take it out, but he says it is your turn.
3. Your sister hits you because you didn't do what she wants you to do.
4. Your family had chocolate cake for dessert last night. You saved your piece for a snack after school. But when you look for it, you find your stepbrother ate it.

Practice with your child

Identify situations where your children had disagreements. Guide them in creating solutions to the problems. Remind children that it is easier to find solutions when they approach others in a respectful manner. They are learning important skills that will last a lifetime.

As children learn how to work through their differences respectfully, they usually have fewer conflicts. That makes it easier to naturally develop feelings of friendship.