



Hunsbury Park Primary School

A Parent's Guide
To
Sibling Rivalry

If you have recently found out or suspect your child may be self-harming, you may be feeling shocked, worried and at a loss on what to do to approach this. Parents who feel their child has become troubled or withdrawn may be worried that they are self-harming as a cry for help. It helps to look at the meaning of self-harm as it can cover a range of things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and harmful way. Although cutting is the most common form of self-harm, other methods include head banging, hair pulling, burning and scalding, biting, scratching, stabbing, breaking bones, swallowing objects, self-poisoning and overdosing.

We can't all get on all of the time – it's natural for your children to argue and fall out with each other and often on a regular basis. The relationship children have with their siblings can help to map out the way they will socialise and deal with disagreements when they grow up.

Why do they have to argue?

One of the reasons brothers and sisters find it hard to get on, is because of differences in age that mean they are at different stages in their development and are interested in activities relating to that. It may help to try and introduce activities and days out that all age groups can participate in, such as a trip to the park – younger children can play on swings whilst the older ones may want to kick a ball about. This means that no one is getting left behind and there's no cause for resentment. Encourage the older sibling to help their younger brother or sister, such as with a game or by building something together, this can make the older child feel important and a special part of their younger siblings' life.

Sometimes younger children feel jealous that their elder brother or sister is allowed to do things that they aren't – such as having a later bedtime or staying out with their friends for longer. Explain that they will be able to enjoy the same privileges as they get older. Point out the advantages of being young – such as they don't have to help around the house as much as their older brother or sister does.

Managing the arguments between the children

Don't rush to stop every argument they have and try to allow them to resolve disagreements themselves. Obviously if it gets out of hand, then be on hand to intervene. As hard as it is, choose the battles accordingly so you are able to make that necessary judgement call. It may be like stating the obvious, but try to treat them equally. If they feel you are taking sides, this can make them think you have favourites, which will only add to the problem! Let them see you getting on with others. This will give them a good example of how people can sort out disagreements through talking calmly rather than fighting. Praise them. Let them know you appreciate the effort they're making when they're getting along. Teach them how to cooperate. Taking turns in games teaches them about cooperation, as does reaching compromises over playing with a particular toy and then swapping over to their brother or sister has a turn.

Remind them to talk through their problems but if things do get too heated, make sure they know to ask an adult to help resolve the conflict. Encourage them to think of others. Ask them how they think their brother or sister is feeling, and what they would want if they were in their position.

This will help them to empathise with others.

If your children are sharing a bedroom, the issue may be privacy and space. You could think about introducing a "my time" rota so that each child has time alone in their bedrooms at specific points in the day to wind down or do homework, etc. This can teach them about thinking of others and enjoying their own company.

We understand how frustrating and irritating it can be, listening to the children arguing over what is often nothing. However, it is crucial to remain calm as your tone of voice and actions will remind them that it's not really such a big deal and will help them listen to you.