

(From previous page) disappointment, their children are more likely to adopt these responses in similar situations – this is basic social learning,” Channon says.

6 Give them one-on-one time

If there are many siblings vying for your attention, it's important to give each individual attention.

“Children do tend to grow out of sibling rivalry if they've learnt social and emotional skills and if their parents have embraced and catered to their individual needs,” McLeod says.

7 Boost their relationship

Help boost your kids' relationship with each other by “talking them up” to each other. For example, saying, “You're so lucky to have such a helpful big brother!” can help them feel more positive towards each other.



Engaging in activities as a family can help strengthen relationships all round.

8 Make family time fun

Enjoying an activity together as a family can help build and strengthen sibling relationships, so think of things you can do that will keep them so busy they don't have time to get on each other's nerves.

9 Separate if necessary

If all else fails, separate your kids for a while to give them some time to cool down. Sometimes all they need is a little

WHEN TO WORRY

“Parents should be concerned if the conflict starts to disrupt the family's daily functioning or the kids' emotional and psychological wellbeing,” child counselor Kirsten McLeod says. Signs include nail-biting, increased anxiety, a change in appetite and sleep patterns, lack of motivation in general (including schoolwork), isolation within the family and behaviour regression such as bedwetting.

“If you notice that conflict between your kids is damaging their self-esteem or that relationships within your family are becoming dysfunctional, family therapy would be advisable,” McLeod adds.

It's when siblings don't have the necessary tools or techniques to deal with conflict that things can become problematic, which is why therapy can help.

“Some therapy practices run emotional and social-skills programmes for children where they learn how to manage the way they think and behave,” McLeod says.

space and time away from each other. ■

* Not their real names.

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