

Oh sister, why art thou?

10 tools for helping our kids navigate the world of siblings & helping us preserve our sanity

THE BRING-SIBLINGS-TOGETHER TOOLS

1. create connection

observe your kids.

What are the activities they do well together?

- Keep a list of these activities handy and try to do one a day.
- It builds up their camaraderie, lowers the sense of competition.
- Seeing each other as fun, a source of 'more' instead of 'less'

2. remove scarcity

Think about how you view the world, and talk about abundance with them.

- Help your children see the abundance in their lives parks, imagination, fresh air, love.
- acting with empathy towards the scarcity
- uniquely vs. equally
- This is the art of SPIN.

THE KEEP-SIBLINGS-APART TOOLS:

3. stop. watch.

What is going on when? When are they at their worst?

- Look for the patterns.
- Address the HALT issues

4. add air

sometimes successfully being together means being apart.

- Know what's coming.
- Plan accordingly.
- Sometimes together-connection is great. Sometimes staying connected means keeping them far apart.

5. see the small differences

See your whole child. Write down 3 traits about each child that you usually overlook or may not comment on.

- Look beyond the sibling opposites.
- Do something about them.
- Think uniquely, not equally.

THE TRIAGE-ASAP-STOP-THE-CONFLICT TOOLS

6. *change the environment*

think outside of the box

- Change things up not as punishment, but as distraction.
- Overload their senses.

7. *cool everyone down*

It can be literal. Or it can be figurative:

- It isn't anger, it's empathy.
- Not just for physical altercations, emotional hurt runs just as deep.

8. *listen carefully*

The bickering may be a symptom of something else all together. Stop and ask the antagonizing child what is happening.

- get quiet so you can hear what is happening under the action.
- Hear what they are feeling.
- Teach them how to name what is going on inside, using "I" language, not blaming language.

9. *walk away*

We often work harder to end the fighting than they do. Walk away or don't get involved—sometimes our presence makes things worse. Tell them the problem solving is in their court. And to come get you when they have a solution or at least have it narrowed down to a couple of options.

- Be their advisor or guide, but not their sherpa carrying the entire load.
- Let go of the outcome.

THE PARENT TOOL

10. *Time for some self-reflection*

Kids measure our pressure and act accordingly—our internal stress is absolutely mirrored by their actions. If we are living under constant stress, so are our children.

- Carve out stress. Seriously.
- Get rid of the obligations.
- Step out of unhealthy places.
- Practice the "high quality no"