

PARENTING MADE SIMPLE

Divide and conquer

Help your children resolve
their disagreements



Based on findings by the Child Development Institute, here are a few useful tips on effective conflict resolution between siblings.

KNOW WHEN TO STEP IN

Disagreements between your children are bound to happen. If it's the usual bickering, then it's best to stay out of it. Allow your kids the chance to solve the problem among themselves first, unless things escalate beyond the usual squabble. Make sure they understand exactly which kind of behaviour won't be tolerated.

DEAL WITH THE ANGER FIRST

It's important to make sure that your kids have settled down before tackling the issue. Listen to what each of your kids is saying, but without assigning

blame to either one of them. Encourage your kids to share how they feel as they tell their side of the story. This serves to encourage a sense of empathy, helping them see that it's not just about, say, a toy, and that there are feelings involved.

ONCE YOU GET INVOLVED

You determine the outcome. Put your children in the same boat: If they can't find a way to share a toy, then none of them will play with it. This shows them that when they fight, no one wins.

AVOID COMPARING YOUR CHILDREN

Stay away from phrases like 'Why can't you be like Anne? She's so well behaved.' – this only creates competition and can escalate the issue. Try not to take sides. Focus on treating them as individuals. If it's an issue of discipline, it should be

done in private and never in front of the other siblings.

SET UP FAMILY MEETINGS

This is a great time to set family rules on behaviour so everyone's accountable. It can also be a platform to let your kids air their differences or complaints, so that issues are solved as a family.

GIVE EACH CHILD A SPACE OF THEIR OWN

Even if your children don't have separate rooms, they most likely have a toy that belongs to them. Organise each child's possessions in such a way that shows clear ownership. In this way, your kids learn to respect each other and their belongings. Doing this also makes it simpler for you as a parent to enforce rules such as 'ask for something first if it doesn't belong to you'. ■

Text: Geraldine Amoko; Photography: Gallo/Getty Images