

FAMILY

RELATIONSHIPS

AND SIBLING

BULLYING



FROM THE DIANA AWARD

Family relationships can be complicated and many of us rely on our family for support. But spending long durations of time together – especially during the COVID-19 lockdown – can lead to fights, disagreements and even bullying behaviour, particularly between siblings and during times of crisis and worry. During the COVID-19 lockdown, it would be no surprise if bullying behaviour between siblings is increasing.

There are several factors that can help reduce incidents of sibling bullying behaviour. A significant factor is empathy (Menesini et al, 2010); therefore, it's important to encourage siblings to see something from another point of view. Furthermore, research has suggested parents can be a great source of support and a key factor to reduce sibling bullying behaviour (Wolke & Skwe, 2012).

TIPS TO TACKLE SIBLING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

SPACES AND BOUNDARIES

If you have the space, try to separate siblings who are experiencing conflict. You can have a timetable to rotate rooms or space. This can include time frames – from morning, afternoon and breaks – for more boundaries for interaction between siblings.

COMMUNICATION

Be clear with your expectations of good and bad behaviour. For younger children, this can be done with a star chart for good behaviour and appropriate rewards. If siblings are arguing, try to encourage communication after everyone has calmed down and when tempers are less likely to fray.

ACTIVITIES

Try to get outside for one hour of exercise a day. You can also do outdoor crafts, jigsaw puzzles, painting, baking and anything else you enjoy. Encouraging siblings to take part in an activity they both enjoy and work together promotes good communication and teamwork skills, which in turn may help reduce sibling bullying behaviour.

RED AND GREEN CARD FOR BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AND BANTER

Show a 'green card' when siblings display 'banter', defined as 'the playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks' in which all siblings are in on the joke. 'Bullying behaviour', in contrast, is 'repeated, negative behaviour intended to make someone feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe'; this would warrant a 'red card'. Encourage a discussion between siblings about what is considered bullying behaviour and what is banter. You could also implement this feature on your star chart. This can encourage visual representations of rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for bad behaviour.

REWARD GOOD BEHAVIOUR

Try to remain positive by rewarding good behaviour, for example, giving your children first choice of television shows or a treat.

DO NOT SHOW PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR EITHER CHILDREN

This can increase rivalry, destroys trust towards the parent and/or build tension within the family – instead, try to stay as impartial as possible. The best behaviour to encourage is teamwork between siblings.

ENCOURAGE EMPATHY

It is important to understand everyone's perspective whilst also providing a space for them to express their concerns.

Helpful phrases may include_

- How would you feel if they were doing that to you?
- Do you think you would like to be treated in a similar way?
- How do you think they feel when you are mean to them?

All these top tips can be tracked on a 'Reward Chart' which may look like this_

GOOD BEHAVIOUR CHART

MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	
FAMILY DINNER 27		WASHING UP 29		FAMILY QUIZ TIME 1			THIS CHART BELONGS TO <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> MY REWARD IS <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>
	TEAM ACTIVITY 5		CHECK-IN 7	TREAT DAY 8	FAMILY WALK 9		
ARTS AND CRAFTS 11		CHECK-IN 13	MEDIATION SESSION 14		BINS OUT 16	TREAT DAY 17	
FAMILY MOVIE 18	BAKING CAKES 19		WASHING UP 21	SWEEP UP 22	BINS OUT 23	PHONE CALL WITH FAMILY 24	
	CHECK IN WITH SIBLINGS 26		FAMILY WALK 28	ARTS AND CRAFTS 29	MEDIATION SESSION 30		

Used nice/positive words

Did something nice for someone

Resolved a disagreement

Showed teamwork

MEDIATION_

SPACES AND BOUNDARIES

As a parent/carer, you have an important role to play in sibling conflict by being an effective mediator. By being a calm mediator during times of disagreements, arguments and bullying behaviour, children can learn from their parent/carer and take more initiative in presenting solutions and discussing their feelings. Research has shown it can be empowering for younger siblings and aids improving relationships between siblings (Hildy & Marysia, 2014). Psychologists such as Elaine Shprungin (2010) have suggested specific tips for parents/carers to successfully mediate during times of conflict:

1. Create a safe environment. You can do this by setting ground rules for the discussion, for example, one person to talk whilst holding an item or to not shout or raise voices.
2. Encourage empathy. Ask your children to take turns to explain their point of view and encourage siblings to put themselves in the other's shoes.
3. Be solution-focused. By the end of the conversation, ensure you have established a fair agreement and clear next steps towards any resolutions that may be required, e.g. 'we will create a chart for good behaviour'. You can also introduce (and agree) sanctions if bullying behaviour takes place in future.

We hope you find these top tips on how to reduce sibling bullying behaviour helpful. Don't forget to tag us on social media (@antibullyingpro) with photos/posts of all the great things you have done since reading this resource!

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visit diana-award.org.uk/donate

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