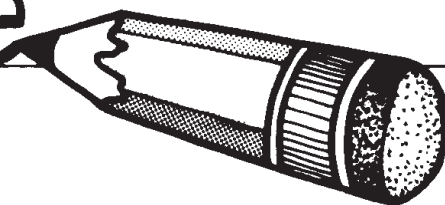


Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of second-grade children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*



Sibling Rivalry

“Mom! Brian’s picking on me!” says Jenny.
“She started it,” Brian yells back.

Sound familiar? If so, you’ve probably experienced several scenes like this and are frustrated with the rivalry that occurs among your children. Sibling rivalry is a normal occurrence in families.

Possible Causes

Jealousy. Children may feel jealous because they must share Mom and Dad with other siblings.

Scarcity. A child may feel on the “short end” of something in the family — affection, praise, recognition or other forms of attention.

Lack of environmental control. A child may feel lack of privacy or lack of control and responsibility.

Ways to Handle Rivalry

Stop children if they are fighting angrily or being physically harmful. Allow time for separation and reinforce the importance of kindness.

Assist children to resolve conflicts they cannot manage themselves. Encourage children to discuss problems and find a solution together.

Recognize the children when they are being nice to each other, like sharing while playing together. Catch them at being good!

Arrange special time with each child. Giving each child your undivided attention 10 minutes a day for a week can help to overcome feelings of being left out or unimportant.

Private space. If a separate bedroom for each child is impossible, try designating a separate chest of drawers or closet or special space to give each child a sense of control in part of the environment.

Avoid comparing one child to another. Each is an individual and needs to be treated fairly, with no favoritism or labels. Help grandparents, teachers and other adults avoid comparing siblings, too.



The Power of Peers

Friends. Peers. Popularity. To a second-grader, these are becoming increasingly important and will continue to be as the child grows. A child's destiny is influenced in part by the power of peers.

Peer Influences

Relationship skills. With peers, children learn such skills as socializing, compromising, dealing with conflicts and putting feelings into words. Provide opportunities for your child to play with peers and practice these social skills.

Self-image. Earning a place in the group has a real bearing on your child's self-image. The child who succeeds in the world of peers during middle childhood will enter the adolescent years with a more solid sense of self-confidence and self-respect, enabling the child to better handle relationships. It is not the quantity of friends that is important but the quality of the relationship developing with friends.

Reality testing. Playmates force children to face realities of their world. They teach what is acceptable and what's not, and how to live by the rules that are a fact of life. Playmates provide new ways to play, think, talk and get along. Your child will question you and learn about what you value in friendships. This information and the actual experiences he encounters will help your child grow in his relationships.

Functions of Peers

Family Replacement. Peer groups provide a certain status independent of one's family. They also can be a stabilizing influence during this time of growth and change in a child's life.

Belonging. Peers can provide a positive influence on a child's self-esteem. It's a good feeling to be important to someone outside the family unit. Children need group support to gather necessary strength to eventually stand on their own.

Transmit values. Contact with peers exposes children to values different from their parents'. It's important for children to realize that many different standards exist in the world. However, strong family values give a child a good basis for deciding whether to incorporate new and different values into her life.

Experience. Peer groups provide an opportunity to practice by doing, to try out different roles. Participation in extra-curricular activities and discussions about life and other topics are important rehearsals for adulthood. Feedback from peers is immediate and can be used to modify and refine one's emerging concept of who I am and what roles I can play. Peer influences need not be threatening. Be involved with your child and his friends. Help to guide them toward a positive experience.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with second-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other home economics programs.