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Hand in Hand Guide

BOND-BUILDING IDEAS TO HELP SIBLINGS GET ALONG



SPECIAL TIME

Hold frequent child-led play sessions with you and one child. Set a timer for 10 minutes daily, or plan a longer amount of time once a week. This is a time, without any disruptions, where a child feels admired and valued by their parent, and eradicates their need to grab attention later on.



PLAY AFFECTION GAMES

Humor and affection diffuses tension, so these games are like first aid to kids that are acting out. Rather than demand they move away from each other, swoop them up into a hug and swing them around, or tell them you have “100 kisses,” to give them when you catch them.



ROUGHHOUSING RULES

Delighted, connecting laughter in your rough and tumble play helps everyone let off steam. This is designated time to let children test their strength and exercise their power, so the adults bumble while trying to catch them, act surprised when they jump out from a hiding spots, and fall over dramatically when they touch you. Roughhousing that nurtures ends up with you being got a lot! Wrestle, pillow fight, romp around, and if you play with two or more children, have them gang up on you—which helps them foster closeness.



STOP SHARING

A good policy for sharing is: “I’ll be with you while you wait.” The child who was playing with a toy gets to play with it fully until they are done while you wait (and listen) to a child who wants the toy. This gives the cranky, whining child a good outlet to shed their feelings – the feelings making it hard for them to share. As you progress with this over time both children will have chances to offload their feelings with you, which balances and connects and builds independence.



GET THEIR TAKE

Spend some time daily where children tell everyone what went well for them and what was difficult that day, and plan a weekly meeting where you invite them to say what they like about one thing happening in the family, and another thing they’d like to see improve. Ask for their suggestions first, so they really feel heard. You’ll provide a space for them to reflect, listen and consider—sometimes they come up with surprising insights.

