

How do you manage fighting kids during a lockdown?



As the nation shuts down family tensions are rising.

Children are often the first to respond negatively to any strain on the family unit - so parents, don't be surprised if your children are fighting at levels well above the norm.



Take your own emotional temperature

If parents are acting stressed and anxious and fighting, the kids are going to do that too, the first thing is to take a look at how you're behaving as parents in your house.

Dealing with a meltdown

What's some of the best ways to cope with an escalating outbreak of sibling anger?

Take a time out: No one is ever too old to take a time out, experts say (even parents).

"They can take a breather, bring their emotions back down," "Because it's really hard to have a constructive conversation when your emotions are heightened."

Use "I" statements: "Then you'd want to have them come back and, very similar to how you would want adults to resolve arguments, you would encourage them to do things like speak in what we call 'I' statements. So instead of saying things like, 'You took my such and such,' an 'I' statement might be, 'I felt really hurt when I saw that you took such and such,' .

'I' statements are often used to defuse arguments -- and later keep them from starting at all.



"They encourage a child [or adult] to express how they're feeling," "And it also makes it less likely for the other person to get defensive, so you are more able to have a constructive back and forth."

No name calling: Obviously, don't let the children call each other names (yes, that's easier said than done).

Stay focused on the now: You don't want to allow the children to bring up things that happened the day before or the week before (as so many of us adults do). Just keep it to the argument or fight of that moment.

Set your children up for success

Now that the argument is handled, it's time to set up your kids for success by nipping irritations in the bud.

Routine is key: "Kids still need routine, and they need both a level of productive activities and downtime, so making sure that they have a schedule in place that they understand and why it exists is a good way to help reduce these arguments"

Expel that excess energy: Yes, it's outdoor exercise, but maybe it's also outside frustration reduction.

"Kids often have aggression towards their siblings because it feels good to them to move their body and push things or kick things to just get all of this nervous or excited energy out,".



"I was letting my son just bang a stick against a fence in our yard. I was like, 'I'm just gonna let him do that because he's probably has some built up feelings happening right now.'"

Change perspective and offer control: Teach conflict resolution and let the kids have a say too.

"Thinking of someone else's perspective -- sometimes kids need to have that broken down for them and help them understand another person's point of view," .

"When the conflicts do happen, you help them understand each other's perspectives and you give them an opportunity to make a solution: "What would you do different next time?"

"Giving kids an opportunity to do some of the problem solving gives them more of a sense of control,".

Be the voice: Many kids, especially younger kids, don't have the words they need to make their wishes met. Parents who recognize this can be the "voice" they need.

"I see a lot of arguments take place with kids who just can't explain their plans to one another," she said. And they don't have "either the language or the social skills to negotiate yet or to work out a flexible plan."

"They might need a parent to jump in, and be like, 'Hey, you play with it for 10 minutes, you play with it for 10 minutes -- let's put on a timer.' "

Create cooperation with sibling teams: That's right: Parents against kids -- on board games, card games, football in the garden, you name it. Your kids will love it, and they'll work together instead of fighting.

"It's not their fault that they think the other person is an enemy. Sometimes they need to be reminded that they're on the same team,".

Don't forget yourself

Probably the most important thing parents can do to keep peace in the family's younger ranks is to be kind and caring to each other and themselves.

"One of the things parents need to do is take some time for themselves, which I know is hard to do right now, but you're not going to be able to model that resiliency and that strength [for your kids] unless you are also taking care of yourself."



That might be as simple as walking away for 10 minutes to collect your thoughts or making time for some deep breathing," she added.

"That might be all the time you get. But taking that time is really critical, so that you can model good behavior for your kids,".

There's another key message for parents too,

Give yourself a break.

"There's no perfect way to do this, and you may misjudge sometimes and think, 'Oh, I'm just gonna ignore that and let them sort it out themselves.' And other times you may intervene too early. And that's all okay! This is all just a work in progress."