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Parent Power Pack

"Resolving Sibling Conflict

A Step by Step Plan"

By

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When my child needs support with an interaction with a sibling or peer, my plan is to follow these steps to manage emotions:

Identify conflict:

Step 1:

a. Pause.

b. Scan my body to see where I feel my emotions.

Examples:

My body feels warm.

I suddenly feel exhausted.

I am reacting in ways uncharacteristic of me.

I feel like yelling.

I need to think.

I feel anxious in my chest.

My stomach hurts.

My muscles feel tense.

c. Breathe in through my nose and out through my mouth several times.

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d. Choose a response that allows me to support and guide my child in a loving way so that my child feels safe knowing I am right there to help.

Some possibilities:

Move my body.

Squeeze my hands.

Push against a wall.

Pet a pet.

Use an oral strategy.

Smell a flower or essential oil

Look at a happy picture of you and your child.

Close your eyes.

Say a prayer.

Listen to music.

Get a hug.

Keep breathing deeply.

Shake out your hands.

Squeeze putty or stress ball.

Blow bubbles. (good for both parent and child)

Drink water.

Repeat a manta or affirmation.

Rock in a rocking chair.

Watch a visual soother e.g. something in nature

Pop bubble wrap.

Slowly sip water, meditatively.

Look at a book or magazine.

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Step 2:

a. Focus first on the child who is hurt. (physically and emotionally)

Soften your presence.

Touch your child.

Make eye contact.

Tune in to your child.

Tune out distractions.

Listen with intention to understand your child's perspective. (no explanations, judgments, lessons, arguing, blaming, dismissing or your agenda.)

b. My child is telling me _____

c. Underlying my child's words are _____

Possible emotions:

Fear

Disappointment

Grief

Hurt

Helplessness

Sadness

Threat

Fairness

d. How I show my empathic listening is by _____

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Possible choices:

Acknowledging my child's feelings.

Validating my child's feelings.

Reflecting my child's feelings.

Accepting and welcoming my child's feelings.

Describing what I observe my child doing.

Acknowledging my child's perspective.

Observing my child's reactions to my listening.

Inviting my child to share thoughts and feelings.

Narrating what happened.

Slowing everything down. (e.g. speech, volume, movement)

e. I know my child feels understood because _____

f. What my child wants the sibling to know is _____

Possible messages:

Keep hands to yourself.

Use kind words.

Answer me.

Play fair.

Share.

Use words.

Ask permission.

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g. Summarize what you heard is important to your child and confirm that you heard accurately. _____

Step 3:

a. Focus next on the child who did the hurting. (physically and emotionally)

Soften your presence.

Touch your child.

Make eye contact.

Tune in to your child.

Tune out distractions.

Listen with intention to understand your child's perspective. (no explanations, judgments, lessons, arguing, blaming, dismissing or your agenda.)

b. My child is telling me _____

c. Underlying my child's words are feelings of _____

Possible feelings:

Fear

Disappointment

Grief

Hurt

Helplessness

Sadness

Threat

Fairness

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d. How I show my empathic listening is by _____

Possible choices:

Acknowledging my child's feelings.

Validating my child's feelings.

Reflecting my child's feelings.

Accepting and welcoming my child's feelings.

Describing what I observe my child doing.

Acknowledging my child's perspective.

Observing my child's reactions to my listening.

Inviting my child to share thoughts and feelings.

Narrating what happened.

Slowing everything down. (e.g. speech, volume, movement)

e. I know my child feels understood because _____

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Possible messages:

Keep hands to yourself.

Use kind words.

Answer me.

Play fair.

Share.

Use words.

Ask permission.

g. Summarize what you heard is important to your child and confirm that you heard accurately. _____

Step 4:

a. With the two children together, each child shares their perspective and what is important for the other to know about the incident. The other child listens only.

a. First child states the message _____

b. Second child states the message: _____

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c. First child restates second child's message _____

d. Did the child state it accurately? _____

e. Second child restates first child's message: _____

f. Did the child state it accurately? _____

g. What do they both agree is the problem? _____

h. What outcome would the first child like? _____

h. What outcome would the second child like? _____

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Step 5:

a. Open up the discussion for solving the problem together, enlisting their strengths to come up with a win-win solution. All suggestions get written down. List suggestions e.g. you can each play with the toy as long as you like and then can offer it to the other person:

b. If needed, help them agree on the solution they both like best. _____

c. Check the solution to see if it prevents the problem from happening again and modify if needed. _____

d. Check the solution to see if it follows the family values and modify if needed.

e. Ask the first child to predict what will happen if each person follows the agreement. _____

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f. Ask the second child to predict will happen if each person follows the agreement.

g. Ask the first child to share what it will feel like to follow the agreement.

h. Ask the second child what it will feel like to follow the agreement.

i. Ask the first child to predict what the sibling will think if the agreement is followed

j. Ask the second child to predict what the sibling will think if the agreement is followed. _____

k. Ask the first child what was learned from "talking it out". _____

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l. Ask the second child what was learned from "talking it out". _____

m. Ask the first child for a do-over, reflecting a correction that will ensure that the same thing cannot happen again and reflects the second child's request.

n. Ask the second child for a do-over, reflecting a correction that will ensure that the same thing cannot happen again and reflects the first child's request.

o. Ask the first child to predict what will happen. _____

p. Ask the second child to predict what will happen. _____

Step 6:

Summarize what happened from Step 2 through Step 5 and ask your children if it is accurate. _____

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Monitor how the agreement is going. When indicated, with both children present, check in to see how they think their agreement is working. If any changes are needed, you can make modifications to the agreement and monitor the updated agreement. Comments on how it's going: -----

Step 7:

a. Write down 3 things you learned from working through this plan. -----

b. Write down your observations and experience of working through this plan.

c. Write down how you feel about the way you parented. Was there anything that got in your way of being the parent you want to be? What will you want to repeat next time? What did you learn about yourself as a parent? -----

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c. After you check in with your children about how the agreement is going, write down your updated thoughts about going through this plan. -----

Tips for improving sibling interactions:

In a safe and supervised way, roughhouse or have pillow fights or do water play to provide a release, through laughter, from the day's stressors. Establish safety rules. Monitor your child's level of arousal and if it becomes too exciting, take a break. Let your inner child have fun.

Spend time daily, being present and delighting in your child while you play together. Play is a way to show love, patience and attention, which strengthens your relationship.

Communicate with your child.

Model behavior you want to see in your child.

Take care of yourself so that you have the inner resources available to help your child. Some ideas:

Use meditation apps e.g. Calm.

Manage my time so that I have time to enjoy my child.

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Schedule time to be alone.

Get exercise.

Eat healthy.

Get enough sleep.

Take breaks when you can.

Play games that are soothing to both of us e.g. coloring, Legos.

Practice mindfulness.

Spend time in nature.

Have a warm drink.

Take a shower.

Schedule regular date nights or time with other adults.

Learn new skills.

Watch or listen to entertainment.

Have an outlet for creativity.

Take time for hobbies.

Write in a gratitude journal.

Volunteer/contribute to causes that are important to you.

Post or read social media.

Change it up.

NOTES:

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