

Relationships

Sibling Rivalry

Get the gloves off!

By Steph McLennan

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It's happened to all of us with a sibling - they've "borrowed" your clothes one too many times without asking, embarrassed you in front of your friends or even dobbed you in for something you didn't do. Arguments and conflicts between siblings is a common occurrence and can be quite minor or escalate into a big problem. So what do you do about them?

Clashes between siblings can start for a number of reasons. Kate, 17, once had her younger brother hit a tennis ball into the side of her head, Chloe, 16, once had a cricket bat swung in her "general direction", causing her great pain in the knee and Trent, 17, says...

some of the things that cause arguments between him and his brothers include using the bathroom in the morning, who watches what on television and telling his friends stupid things he has done.

Other causes can be competing for the attention of parents; an older child may feel like the younger child is getting all the attention or someone is jealous of someone else.

Kate dealt with her brother's tennis ball incident by pegging it back at him twice as hard...then running; Chloe shouted at her sister and Trent said that occasions like this usually end up with a shouting match until someone gives in. These are common ways of dealing with sibling problems, but may not be the best. We've all heard that...

"communication is the key".

In this case, communication is the key to solving an issue with your brother or sister. If they do something you don't like, don't make hints at your displeasure - tell them straight up! But don't shout it at them - if you're angry and riled up, give yourself some time to calm down (or get some First Aid!) before telling your sib what's up.

Another "C" word is...

"compromise".

If you both want to watch something on telly tonight, tell them that they can watch tonight if they let you watch tomorrow night (and get some extra homework done in the process!). The ability to compromise and negotiate takes a lot of initiative and maturity and is a great way to show your parents that you truly are a responsible, young adult.

"R.E.S.P.E.C.T."

...is the Aretha Franklin song, and respect is what you should give to your sib's own space and life. Even though you are a huge part of their life, that doesn't give you the right to barge into their room unannounced or rifle through their personal stuff. You have your space and let them have theirs. The same goes for people - you may have mutual friends, but don't always tag along on their outings if they need some time just with their friends.

Some dos and don'ts of sibling relationships:

- Don't call each other names - you're not in kindergarten any more!
- Do allow yourself some time to calm down before trying to sort out an issue
- Don't ask your parents to take sides and sort it out for you
- Do learn to communicate better with your sibling - it can make good practice for the rest of your life!
- Don't "pull one over" a younger sibling - one day they'll be old enough to get you back
- Don't be afraid to say those three big words: I am sorry. (And chuck in an "I love you" at the end - just to make everyone happy!)
- Do remember that some conflict is perfectly normal, but WWIII every day of the week is perhaps a little too much

Above all, remember that you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family and you're stuck with them for a while, so try to make peace and get along!



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Steph Mobernien is in Year 12 at Wilderness School, loves lots of stuff like stand-up comedy, icecream, science, her double bass, flying and shiny things, if she grows up she wants to be a medical researcher.

