



THEY WON'T STOP FIGHTING!

Strategies for Preventing and Resolving Sibling Conflict



All Siblings Fight

- To get attention
- Lacking an understanding of their sibling's individual temperament and interests
- Unaware of the changing or different needs of their sibling
- Rivalry or competition
- An expression of anger or frustration
- To change (control) your behavior



And Parents Respond

- Immediately end the argument
- Jump in and solve it
- Ignore the situation altogether
- Use problem-solving after-the-fact to teach skills

Pause

- Think about a recent time when your children were fighting.
 - What were they fighting about?
 - How did you react/resolve the conflict?



Looking for help?

The internet has many articles and blogs about using conflict resolution strategies that involve teaching kids problem solving

Do they help?

Should you use them?

Sibling Conflict and Your Child with ASD

- If one or more of your children have autism, the approach may have to be different.
- the reasons for the conflicts might be different
- your child may have challenges with skills that make conflicts with siblings more likely or more difficult to resolve
 - Sharing issues?
 - Frustration with play?
 - Social emotional development issues (perspective taking, reading social cues, reading emotions, and more)?
 - Emotional regulation challenges?
 - Difficult expressing and communicating needs (need for quiet time, for example)
- Adults have tools/strategies. Siblings – well, that's a different story



Pause

- For that recent conflict, were some of the triggers related your child's challenges resulting from ASD?

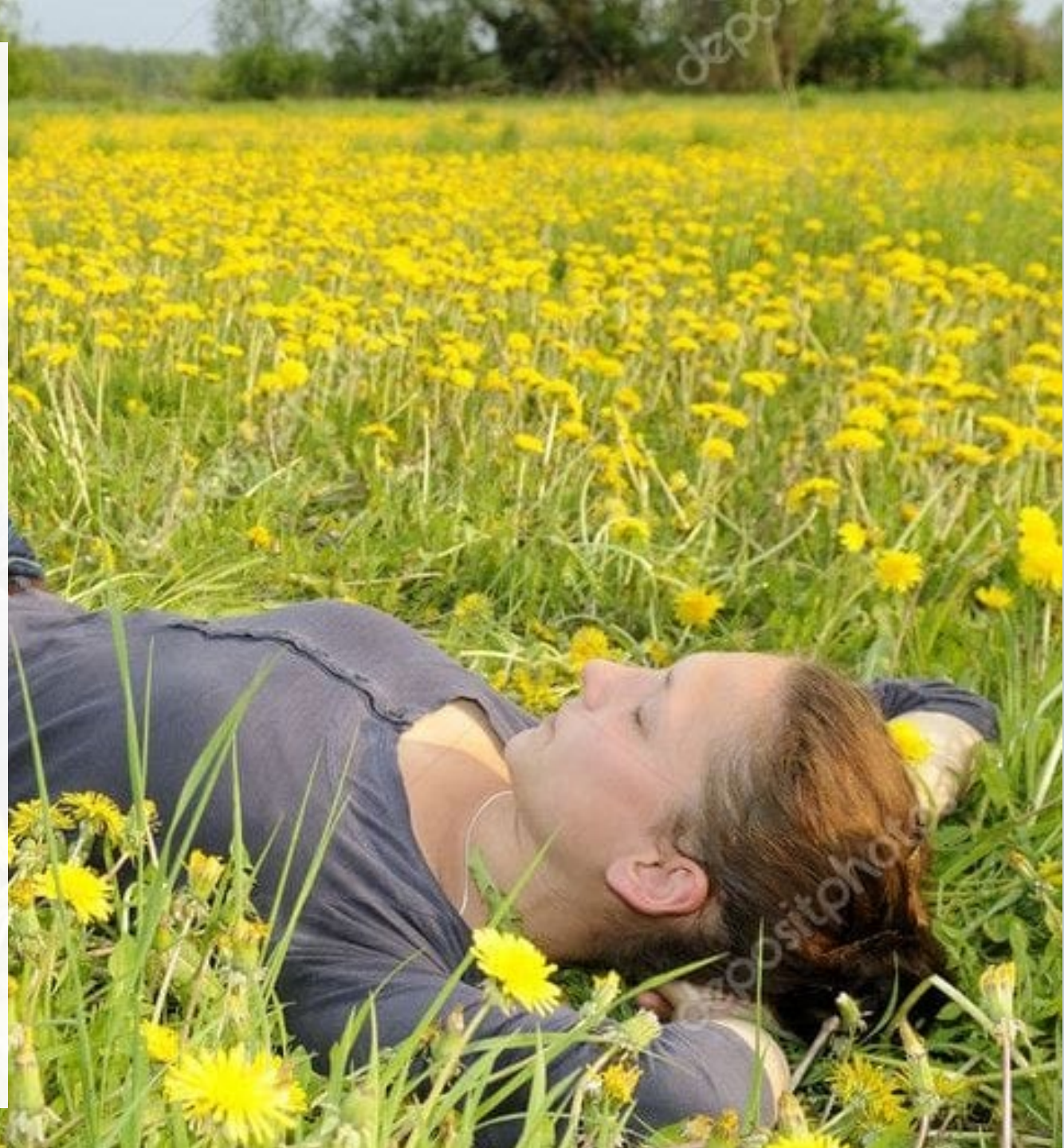


Siblings are the people we practice on, the people who teach us about fairness and cooperation and kindness and caring, quite often the hard way.

~Pamela Dugdale

Strategies to increase peace

- Strategies to decrease fighting
- Strategies for resolving conflicts





STRATEGIES TO DECREASE FIGHTING

THE POWER OF BEING PROACTIVE



#1 LEARN MORE
ABOUT “WHY”



Take notes!

- What causes each fight
- What does each child do
- What does their fighting behavior look like
- What ends the fight
- What are things like after the fight

#2 USE THE
“WHY” TO SELECT
PROACTIVE
STRATEGIES



After you have a better idea of why (typically), you can use proactive strategies

- Support for skill deficits
 - Emotional
 - Social
 - Play
- Arranging the environment for success



Support social & emotional learning

- Recognizing behaviors that make others feel angry or upset
- Recognizing when others are upset, frustrated, or angry and how to respond
- Empathy

Social-Emotional Stages of Development

(S. Greenspan and S. Wieder)



Social problem solving and conflict resolution can't happen without other skills in place

Pause

- Does your child have social emotional challenges?
 - Difficulty with taking other's perspective
 - Difficulty recognizing emotions
 - Appropriate response to social cues
 - And so forth

And Emotional Regulation, too

- Recognize when child is getting upset or frustrated with sibling and help child:
 - Communicate feeling and why
 - Appropriately ask for alternative
 - Calm self



Pause

- Does your child have emotional regulations challenges?
 - Overreacts to situations
 - Difficulty calming down
 - And so forth



Support Social Play

Help your child with autism learn social play skills and help your children learn to play together

Challenges (just a few of the many)

- Different levels of social play skills
- Behaviors that are confusing or frustrating to other sibling
 - Sharing and turn-taking
 - Rigidity in play scripts
- Not recognizing social cues



Find Activities They Can Do Together

- Age appropriate
- Concrete, not “pretend”
- Require interaction
- They both like



Finding Common Interests

Do they like similar TV or movies and their characters?

Is there a specific toy or type of toy they all enjoy?

Do they enjoy being outside

Can you “connect” their interests (one like Legos, one likes animals – build Lego animals)?

Do they like arts and crafts?



Other considerations

- Fast or slow paced
- Quiet or active/loud
- Inside or outside
- Sensory needs



Teamwork!

- Both need to do their part to accomplish the goal
- Reward awesome teamwork!



Tips for Success

- Reward!
- It's okay to start small (easy games, not too long)
- Use schedules and timers to communicate expectations for your child with autism
- Be realistic about expectations
- End on success, don't wait for the children to start fighting to end play
- Provide many opportunities



One more tip

- Forced sharing
versus
- Planned turn-taking

Pause

- Does your child have social play challenges?
 - Sharing and compromise
 - Rigidity in play
 - Prefers to play alone
 - And so forth



Set Up the Environment for Success

- Provide attention proactively
- Make sure children have personal space
- Make sure they aren't hangry or tired

KNOW HOW YOU WILL RESPOND WHEN CONFLICT OCCURS

A wooden clothespin is clipped to a white rectangular card. The card is tilted and features the words "BE PREPARED" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The card is held against a dark blue, textured background. A thin, light-colored string or thread runs horizontally across the middle of the frame, passing behind the clothespin and the card.

BE PREPARED

One child grabs the tablet from another, conflict results

Escalating Responses

- Stop fighting with your sister!
- You can't do that! Give it back!

De-escalating Responses

- It looks like you want a turn with the tablet. And you are upset because he grabbed it from you. Let's figure this out. But first we all have to calm down.



STRATEGIES FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT



Stay out for as long as you can?


In our case, one or more of the siblings involved may have difficulty with managing social emotional regulation, de-escalation, perspective-taking, social play skills such as sharing, rigidity/inflexible behavior patterns, and so forth.

Letting them try to resolve things on their own:

- Does not necessarily address the underlying cause
- Prerequisite behaviors for problem-solving may not be developed
- Outcome of conflict might make it more likely the fighting behavior will occur again

- For our kids, recognizing the warning signs that a conflict is coming and intervening early can be more effective
- **As long as** we use that as an opportunity to address the reasons for the impending conflict (for example, teaching the child to say “I need some alone time” as opposed to shoving sibling, which then escalates)

WHEN CONFLICTS
HAPPEN...



TAKE A BREATH

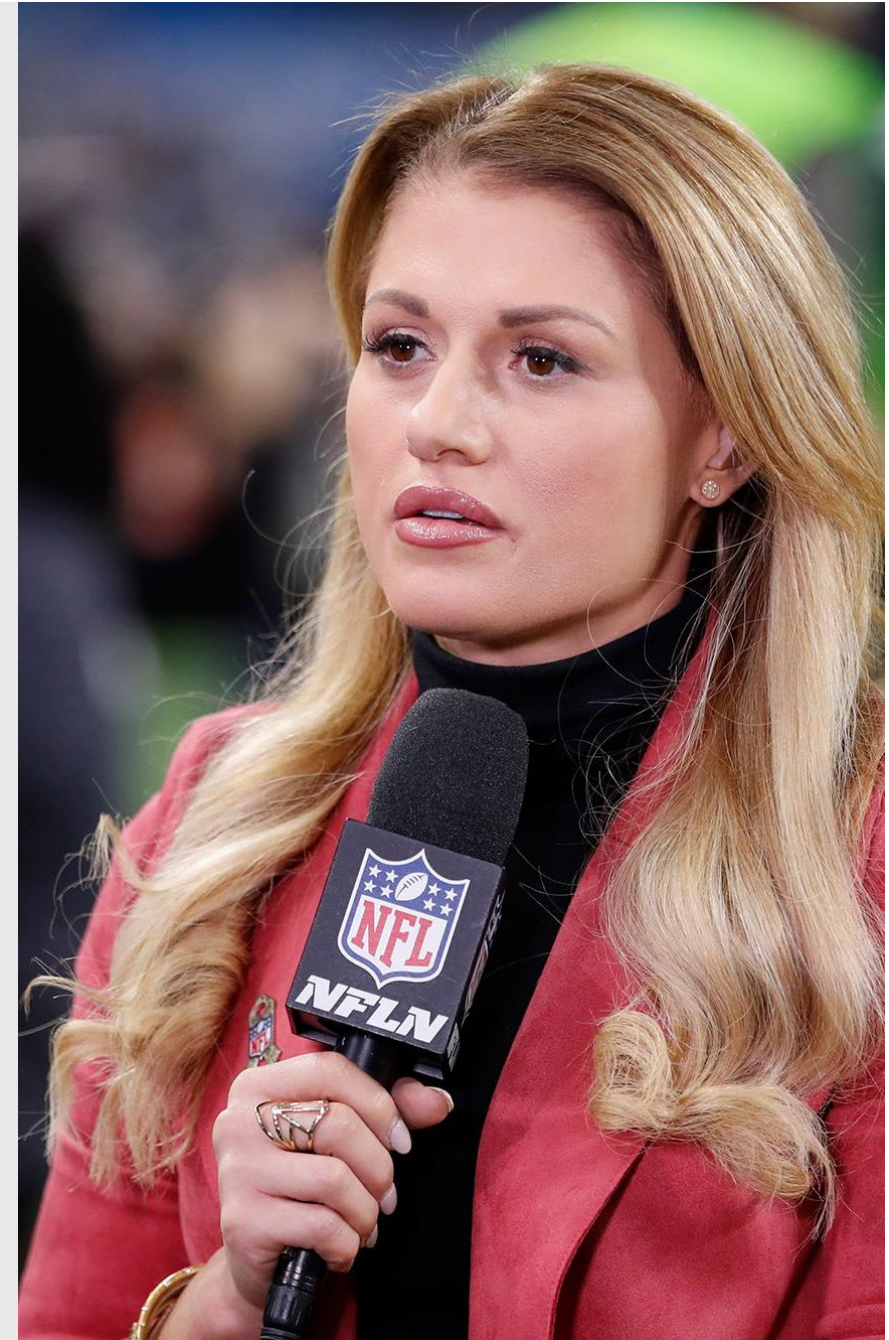


Keep Everyone Safe

- If physical aggression has occurred, or is likely, intervene immediately
- Physically separate, into different spaces, if possible
- De-escalate
 - Each child has their own way of calming down. Practice calming strategies when things are **not** elevated

Sportscast

- Minimize attention
- Don't take sides
- Describe, don't commentate
- Describe facial expressions and emotions (help with social-emotional learning)





Let Them Talk

Encourage use of "I" statements, rather than "blame" statements

"Feelings" statements are okay!



Have a back-up
plan



Practice Alternatives

What could you have done
instead?

Role-playing (with toys)

Reward good options



Take lessons from the conflict and its resolution

What "caused" this fight?

What proactive strategies can be practiced to make fights less likely?

Check your response

Did your approach de-escalate the situation or escalate it?

Use that information to prepare for next time.

What did they learn?

Conflict happens. Be ready



- It is not possible to eliminate it
- Recognize when you can do things to help prevent it
- Have some ideas about how you will respond when it does happen
- Learn from each conflict and use those lessons to help give your children skills that will make conflict less likely and easier to resolve when it does happen