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## **THE KIDS ARE AT IT AGAIN!**

Do your children fight with each other? Why? Understanding why kids quarrel can help you determine what to do about it. A “prevention plan” can help prevent the situation from happening in the future.

Consider the following reasons of sibling fights and how you might deal with them.

1. Why? Tired, hungry or bored.

PREVENTION PLAN: When children’s basic needs are not being met, they are less likely to get along with others. Consistency in nap and bed times, as well as meal schedules is important. If a child becomes irritable, it may be time for a short nap, a healthy snack or a change in the current activity.

2. Why? Needs attention.

PREVENTION PLAN: If your children know they will get attention from you if they fight, it may be time to re-program. Give more attention for good behavior and ignore their minor squabbles. Spend individual time with each of your children. Studies show as little as 15 minutes of individual attention per day will reduce aggressive behavior. This could include a variety of things from playing a game together, to help with homework or even doing household chores together. Teach your children to ask for attention in a positive way by saying things like “I need a hug” or “Please play with me”.

3. Why? Wants companionship.

PREVENTION PLAN: Teach children how to ask their brothers and sisters to play with them. This can be as basic as saying “Would you play with me?” or “Can I play with your toy?” If older siblings are frustrated by younger brothers and sisters, teach them activities that different ages can do together. Also teach your children how to negotiate. Children need to learn to trade toys rather than grabbing them and to take turns and wait for their turn.

4. Why? Power.

PREVENTION PLAN: Children experiment to find out what things they can get other brothers and sisters to do. They also notice what things other siblings can do and they cannot. This creates competition between siblings. To prevent power struggles, don’t take sides. It is more effective if each child has to confess his/her own actions, not the other child’s actions. This helps children to accept responsibility for their own actions and reduces blaming.

Sibling fights can be minimized by utilizing these “prevention plan” techniques. If the situation is all ready extreme, professional help may be needed. Don’t ignore cruel behavior between siblings. Children can suffer serious emotional trauma from sibling abuse.

Some characteristics of sibling abuse includes:

- Life-threatening behaviors, such as choking or shooting with a BB gun.
- Excessive tickling.
- Extreme teasing, ridiculing, or intimidating.
- Destruction of a child’s personal possessions.

- Unwanted touching.

If these situation exist, seek professional help from a counselor.