

Early Learning Parents' Pages

October 2017

Tips on how to survive sibling fights.

October is about fall and Halloween.



It's also National Book Month, Bullying Prevention Month and Head Start Awareness Month.

Handling sibling rivalry

If you have more than one child, you have faced one of the most troubling preschool parenting problems, sibling rivalry.

Fighting, arguing, teasing and tattling are very annoying and can cause you to react without thinking just to stop the behavior. If you have two or more children, you may have to deal with this every day. It is hard to react rationally when children are acting so irrationally. In her book *The Top Ten Preschool Parenting Problems*, Rosalyn Ann Duffy has a list of ideas she calls a Parent's Survival Guide to Sibling Fights.

Why do siblings fight? Young children who live together may not have developed the social skills needed to work and play together. All children want mom and dad's exclusive attention and may not be able to share that with another child. These skills often link to seeing other perspectives, which is difficult for young children. Each child thinks he is the victim and the sibling is the aggressor. Instead of becoming judge and jury, focus on ending the fight.

Before you intervene, **evaluate** the children's actions. Is this something they can resolve on their own? If you walk away, will someone get hurt? If not, let the children find a resolution on their own. Evaluate the situation before you **act**.



Stop the action if you feel someone may get hurt or something may get broken. Separate the children and let them calm down before you talk about the problem. "You both seem very upset. You need some time to calm down." Put the children in different rooms, the same room or even on the same bench, but no one is allowed to talk or touch the other or get up until both of them are calm and ready to talk without yelling or crying. Then, **guide** them to discuss what happened and how they could have interacted differently. Ask each one to tell you what happened and do not allow them to interrupt each other. For example, your two children are fighting over some blocks. Timmy says, "Joey pulled on the red block and made my building fall down." Joey's version differs, "Timmy had all of the red blocks and I needed one for my red tower." Summarize the facts of each version, "Joey, you needed a red block,

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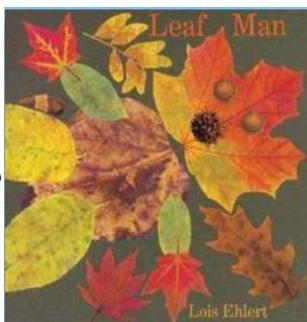
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Autumn leaves and pumpkins

Fall in Florida is different in different parts of the state. North Florida may get some cooler weather and some leaves may change colors or fall from the trees. Other parts of Florida may only experience less humidity and slightly shorter days. Wherever you live, you can teach your child about the changing seasons and what may be happening in the fall in other parts of our state and country.

Take a walk in your yard or a nearby park and pick up leaves. Take them home to use for various fun learning activities with your child.



Preschoolers and toddlers can use leaves to count, make patterns, group by color, shape or leaf size. Let your child glue leaves to paper and paint them different colors or paint around the leaves. Help your child use different shaped leaves to make a leaf-man and read the book, [Leaf Man](#) by Lois Ehlert.

Most places have "pumpkin patches" or grocery stores where you can buy a pumpkin. Pumpkins can be a source of many exciting learning activities. Teach your child about the five senses by having him look at the pumpkin and describe what he sees. Talk about the pumpkin's size, shape and color. Ask him to feel it. Is it smooth or rough? Thump the outside of the pumpkin with your finger. What



sound does that make? Cut a hole in the top and have him explore the inside of the pumpkin. How does it feel, taste,

Sibling rivalry

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but Timmy used it in his building. Joey, how would you feel if Timmy had knocked over your tower to get one of your blocks? Would you have been sad or angry?" **Model** how to talk through a problem such as both of them wanting the same block. Help them develop [skills they need to share](#) and solve problems on their own.

If the children are toddlers or have not learned how to compromise, model for them [how to use words to resolve a conflict](#). If they both want the same toy, show them how to take turns sharing the toy or playing with it together. Help them identify their emotions: "It looks like you both want to play with the same doll. When your sister took the doll did that make you feel sad or angry?" Help them learn what to do when they [feel sad or angry](#) with someone else.

You can **prevent** future problems by helping your children develop the social and emotional skills needed to get along with each other. It is important to know what social and emotional skills are typical for the age of your children. Find the [social and emotional milestones](#)



for their ages and learn ways to support their development so your children will learn ways to resolve conflicts on their own.



Your children are not the only ones.
Siblings aged 3 to 7 fight as much as 3.5 times an hour,
and those aged 2 to 4 – about every 10 minutes!

Kluger, J.

(July 10, 2006)

"The New Science of Siblings"

Time, p. 49.



smell and look? Clean out the pumpkin and look at the seeds. Talk about their size, shape and color. Plant some seeds to watch them grow. Bake some and eat them for a snack. Carve or draw a face on the pumpkin. Read the book, *Pumpkin Pumpkin* by Jeanne Titherington. Talk about how the pumpkin grows from a seed to a vine and how the blooms form into pumpkins. These activities support your child in developing math and science concepts and help increase his vocabulary. You will enjoy and value the time you spend with your child and he will discover that learning is fun.



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Celebrate Head Start!

On Oct. 22, 1982, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed October as Head Start Awareness Month—a time to celebrate the life-changing impact Head Start has on the lives of many children and families.



[Head Start began in 1965](#) as a summer program for children from low-income families. Its mission? To help break the cycle of poverty by providing their preschool children with a program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Head Start programs are culturally responsive to the children and local communities they serve. There are various service models to meet the needs of children and families. Programs are located in the centers or schools children attend for part-day or full-day services; family child care homes; and/or children's own homes, where a Head Start staff member visits weekly to provide services to the child and family. Children and families who receive home-based services attend meetings with other Head Start families to learn as a group. Head Start was originally a program for preschoolers but today 3- and 4-year-olds make up more than 80 percent of children served each year. Early Head Start began as a way to serve pregnant women, infants and toddlers. Early Head Start programs are available to a family until the child turns 3 and is ready to move into Head Start or another preschool program. Many Early Head Start programs partner with existing infant and toddler child care programs, resulting in more quality services for all children enrolled in the child care program. To find a Head Start or Early Head Start program in your area, click [here](#).

Big, small, young or old, everyone likes a good story. October is National Book Month—the perfect time to engage yourself and children, toddlers, even infants, in reading. Research shows that by age 3, a brain development gap starts to appear between children whose parents read to them and those who do not. [Read Aloud 15 Minutes](#) advises reading out loud with children at least 15 minutes a day. Watch the *Read From Birth* video on their website.

During October, make reading together as a family fun. Read to your child as she takes a bath or eats a snack. Use family photos as pictures to make a book together.

Young children and BULLYING

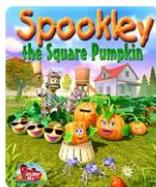
October is [National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month](#). You may wonder if [bullying happens in preschools](#) and other educational settings for young children. Young children are in the process of learning social, emotional and cognitive skills that allow them to reason and solve problems. Some young children may display aggressive or challenging behaviors who have not yet developed the skills necessary to work and play cooperatively with other children. If these children are not helped to develop these skills, they may be considered bullies as they get older.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bullying—by definition—is any “unwanted aggressive behaviors by a youth or group of youths who are not siblings that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times.”

Young children have not yet developed the cognitive, social and emotional skills involved in bullying. However, physical and verbal aggressive behavior is present in young children and usually results from a lack of self-management skills, and limited communication and social skills. So, preventing bullying is the focus of Bullying Prevention Awareness Month in child care settings and preschools.

You can help your child [learn appropriate social skills](#) by modeling [kindness](#) and [empathy](#) in your interactions with others. You can [read stories](#) to your child about characters who are kind and helpful to others and how different types of characters work and play together. Help your child identify his emotions and feelings and find ways to deal with anger or aggression in [age-appropriate ways](#). Make sure he knows how to tell an adult if another child or adult is hurting him or making him feel sad by what they say to him.

Choose a child care provider or school for your child that has a developmentally appropriate environment and teachers who help children practice appropriate behavior, model compassion and kindness, and help children learn to self-regulate and solve problems.



Teachers can find an online [Bullying Prevention Toolkit](#) with resources to use with this book. The book introduces ideas for ways children can interact with other children who may be different from them in some way.



Write something about each one. Let your child dress as a book character and interview her. Video that and post it on social media for other relatives to enjoy. Invite family who live elsewhere to record themselves reading one of your child's favorite books and email it to her or read it to him on Facetime. Have a reading night when all the family reads to each other or tells stories. Visit [Storyline Online](#) where you can have a celebrity read to your child. S

Use [#NationalBookMonth](#) to post photos of the fun on social media for extended family. Reading aloud to your child may be the most important thing you can do to prepare her for success.

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Happy Halloween!

Halloween is a holiday everyone can enjoy, as long as your child is safe. While older children find excitement in the "trick or treat experience," younger children may need some reminding about what is "pretend" and what is not. It may also be helpful for your children to keep their Halloween age-appropriate and family-friendly. Here are some age-appropriate suggestions to help promote a safe and enjoyable Oct. 31.

- In the first two years of life, children like to pretend and use their imagination, but sometimes cannot tell what is real and what is not. Make sure your child is aware that many Halloween things are not real, such as masks, costumes and scary noises. If your child is scared, rather than telling them, "Don't be afraid," reassure them they are safe. Take young children to houses of family and friends because they may be afraid of strangers or take them to a party specifically for young children.
- Children between ages 3 and 5 depend on their sense of sight, so you may want to avoid masks. They



can restrict their vision and be scary to young children. The week before Halloween, encourage your child to play dress-up with their costume and become more comfortable in it. Take your child out early before many of the older children are out in their scary costumes or go to a party for young children instead.



- Children between ages 5 and 8 focus less on their imagination and begin to use logical thinking to make sense of their surroundings. Children in this age range may claim to enjoy costumes and scary things, but they may really be afraid of costumes and objects such as bloody knives or swords and life-like zombies or monsters. "Haunted houses" may be too close to reality for children in this age range.
- Children ages 8 to 11 focus more on social status and fitting in with their friends. This may affect the type of costume or type of activity they enjoy at Halloween. Make sure to talk with your child about the costume and activities allowed. Let them know that some costumes and activities may be inappropriate for younger children who will also be out on Halloween. Make sure your child knows destructive behavior (such as destroying property or pumpkins and "egging") is illegal and not allowed.

Coming in November

- **Getting Children to Do Chores**
- **Family Engagement Month**
- **Military Family Month**
- **Veterans Day**
- **Thanksgiving**



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