

POSITIVE PARENTING MANUAL

2

FIGHTING WITH SIBLINGS



Disciplining children without
the use of corporal punishment

unicef 

for every child

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ஒவ்வொரு சிறுவர்களுக்காகவும்

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FIGHTING WITH SIBLINGS

© UNICEF, April 2023

ISBN : 978-92-806-5108 -9

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In this manual, the term “mother/father/parent” is used for convenience. It applies to all those with a caring role, including grandparents and extended family members, foster carers, etc.

Acknowledgements

This publication is adapted from the original work of Ms. H.P.C Wasantha Pathirana MSc. (University of Kelaniya) M.A. (University of Kelaniya) B.A. (Special) University of Colombo, and we thank her for her contribution.

Positive Parenting manual booklets

1. Talking Back
2. Fighting with Siblings
3. Neglecting Schoolwork
4. Household Chores and Responsibilities
5. Returning Home Late
6. Setting Limits on the Use of Digital Devices
7. Fussy Eaters
8. Throwing Tantrums
9. Relationships
10. Staying Awake Past Bedtime
11. Substance Abuse
12. Gender

The icons in this book depicts the following to its readers



Think a Minute



Point To Remember



Important Lesson



Practical Advice



Question



Write Your Thoughts

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PARENTING

What is Positive Parenting?

Positive Parenting is not restricted to a method, a set of rules, or a style; it is a belief, a way of living. Children should be treated with respect, free from fear of violence and shame, and guided with loving encouragement. The very first step to become a positive parent is to adjust one's thinking, by improving your own knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills. To achieve this, parents must be willing to reflect on themselves and their role as parents, do their best to complete all the activities; and use the new information in their daily interactions with their children. Parents will learn that communication is a crucial way to ensure an ongoing relationship with their children.

Positive Parenting Manual

This manual allows us to begin thinking about how we can bring up a child without inflicting/causing physical harm. This method is known as positive parenting.

This manual focuses on specific tools such as:

- How to establish goals for you and your child
- How to spend quality time with your children
- How to express yourself and enable your child to express their feelings in a safe environment
- How to use praise and reward
- How to give instructions and establish household rules
- How to redirect and ignore negative behaviours
- How to use consequences and establish cool down times
- How to resolve conflicts

By repeatedly referring to this manual, you will gain a sound understanding of the different methods available to discipline your child.



**What positive parenting is:**

- Positive parenting is about long-term solutions that develop children's self-discipline.
- Positive parenting is clear communication of expectations, rules and limits.
- Positive parenting is about building a mutually respectful relationship with your children.
- Positive parenting is about teaching children life-long skills.
- Positive parenting is about increasing children's competence and confidence to handle challenging situations.
- Positive parenting is about teaching courtesy, non-violence, empathy, self-respect, human rights and respect for others.

What positive parenting is not:

- Positive parenting is not permissive parenting.
- Positive parenting is not letting children do whatever they want.
- Positive parenting is not about having no rules, limits or expectations.
- Positive parenting is not about short-term reactions or alternative punishments to slapping and hitting.



A common complaint among parents is that their children are not obedient.

"This child is very disobedient. S/he never listens to anything we say." "S/he always does what we ask her/him not to do. Not in the least bit obedient." Are statements like these made in your family? Do you feel that your children are disobedient?

In your opinion, what characteristics are typical of a child who is obedient? A child who is inclined to be disobedient?

List them separately.

Disobedient	Obedient

Compare your column on obedience with that of another parent's column on obedience. Have a discussion on this. You most probably will see both similarities and differences between the two lists.

Reflect on your own parenting style and consider how you contribute to this behavior.



The differences highlight that what we consider as obedience/disobedience is a relative factor. This just means that the way you think of it is different to the way someone else thinks about it.

Once you have a clear understanding of the key behaviours you want to see or change, try out the strategies below to address these behaviours and support your child to think and act independently.



1. Make a list of what is considered good and bad behaviour at home, the boundaries of these behaviours as well as the consequences of not adhering to the boundaries. Depending on the age of your child/ children, do this together with them. Display this list at home in a place where everyone can see.
2. Appreciate and praise the child every time s/he displays good behaviour. The love you show towards your child must be unconditional and positive.
3. Also note, we should disapprove and dislike the wrongful behaviour of the child, not the child himself.

At times, parenting can be difficult! So, it is important to keep in mind that these positive parenting techniques take time and patience to be successful. It cannot be achieved in one day. If they don't work today, remember to try again tomorrow. It is important to be consistent in your parenting approach and being consistent is the only way your child may be able to understand what you are trying to communicate.

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Parenting for Lifelong Health: Handbook for Adolescents







FIGHTING WITH SIBLINGS

Every family with more than one child is confronted by the nature of the relationship between siblings. While it can be one of love and learning to share, it can also be one where children experience violence and rivalry for the first time. This chapter focuses on the family relationships between children at home and how to manage conflicts that arise between them.

This is a story of a Father:

"My three sons, aged 13, 10 and 8 years are constantly hitting each other. They don't listen to us no matter how much they've been told not to fight. I have even beaten them asking them to not hit each other. But they can't be controlled.

My wife who also eventually got tired of this said "Let them hit each other in any way, once someone gets hurt they will learn their lesson". So we watched helplessly while our children fought yesterday. Before we could intervene, one (the youngest child) was pushed down and broke his arm. Therefore, we were in hospital till very late in the night".

Arguments/fighting at home among children could end up like this. Situations like these, cause both parents and children to feel distressed and helpless. Parents get angry when children hit each other. They then reprimand a child in anger, but regret it later when they understand the reason for the fight. This means that the anger turns to pain, hurt and regret.



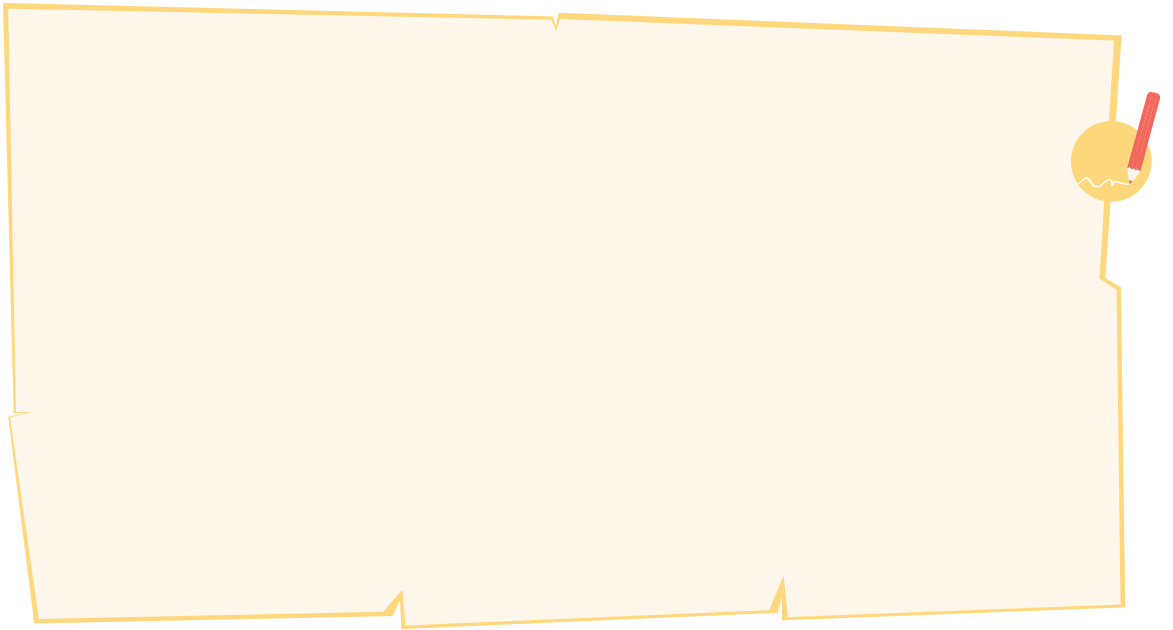
As a parent, have you also faced a similar situation where you resorted to using physical force to stop children fighting and felt regret and helplessness afterwards?

Write briefly about such an instance.



?

How do you now feel about your reaction in that instance?



?

How could you have reacted differently?



As we reflect on the answers to the above questions, let us think about this as well.

One of the common behaviours between siblings that we can observe is them fighting and making up.

“Fighting like cats one moment and then best of friends the next. Can’t live without each other. But at each other’s throats when they’re together”

Why do siblings fight?

- Almost all young children act aggressively from time to time, and some will go through longer phases of being aggressive. Your child’s aggression and fighting will most likely decrease as his/her social skills and language mature.
- A major reason siblings fight is when they seek attention. A child is someone who seeks a lot of attention, especially from their parents. Receiving attention from the parent is a requirement that a child has at different stages of development. When a child does not receive this attention, s/he may use different tactics to obtain it.
- Children may also start to fight or be aggressive when there is a new addition to the family. The attention that the child had would now be directed to the new addition that is the brother/sister. S/he may consider this a threat. Sometimes as they grow older there can be competition between the two children. This could result in every little thing, starting from the toys they share to the clothes they wear, becoming a competition or a fight.
- This competition between siblings could result in a considerable amount of jealousy between them. It could also be a contributing factor in precipitating the fights. A child’s change in growth requirements, loneliness, and their search for identity as to ‘who am I’ also affects their behaviour.
- When a child approaches school-going age s/he may understand notions of equality and justice quite strongly. Therefore, they fail to understand why her/his sisters and brothers are being treated differently or why s/he is being treated differently.
- Another major reason for children to fight is because they imitate or follow an example that has been set. The way elders behave in conflict and how they resolve conflicts, affect children. They imitate this. If parents resolve their conflicts by assaulting each other, children also beat each other when resolving their issues.
- What a child views on television like cartoons, other programmes and violence in sports also influences children. This could be a reason behind her/his violent behaviour with siblings.

It is imperative that we identify and know the reasons why children resort to fighting. Without knowing this or understanding the nature of the child, we will not be able to find satisfactory answers or methods as to how we should deal with them when they fight.

Other Factors that may affect Sibling Relationships

- **Birth Order**

First Borns

Initially, first borns are the only child in a family and enjoy the undivided attention of their parents, only to lose it later to a new sibling. They may try to bring back that lost attention, and try to please their parents. They may also nurture and take care of their younger siblings, often imposing their authority on them which may lead to conflict.

Middle Borns

Middle children may fare better, having had experienced both sides of the situation, given that they had to share parental attention from the moment they were born.

Last borns

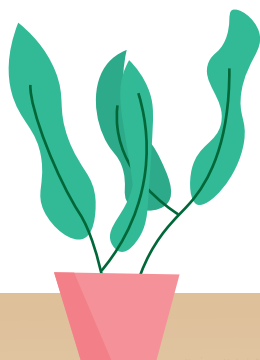
The youngest of the family will be born to more experienced parents, parents who by now are probably more relaxed when disciplining their offspring. It is likely that this child will be the 'baby' of the family.

- **The Gender**

The differences in gender and likes and dislikes may often be a source of conflict between siblings.

- **The Age-gap**

Siblings with a close age gap of three or two years—may form a bond of companionship throughout childhood. At the same time, however, because they both have roughly the same needs at the same time, they may also compete for parental attention with competition and jealousy being more likely. A larger age gap of more than four years is generally enough to ensure that the needs of any two siblings don't overlap much, so there will be less competition and rivalry between such sibling pairs. In fact, the relationship that tends to develop between siblings who are widely spaced is more of a 'carer/cared for' than a peer relationship.



Strategies for dealing with fights

Interfere in a calm manner

It's perfectly natural for your children to play in a rowdy or rough way. It's understandable if you want to protect your children from getting hurt, but stepping in to stop their game may make them feel resentful and frustrated.

Just make sure the children are playing safely, and in a place where they can't hurt themselves or damage anything. Try not to step in too often but keep an eye on them in case things ramp up and get physically aggressive. If you think that one of the children may get injured, or something may get broken, step in straight away. Intervene in a cautious manner so that one child does not feel that you always take sides with the other. If a child feels that you always tend to take her/his side, s/he will dominate the sibling. This will cause the other child to feel that s/he is unjustly treated, and this may cause the child to harbour animosity. This may bring about adverse results in a fight that occurs when parents are not home.



When a child requests help and you see a fight. What should you do in such an instance?

Distinctly call them out by name and state your command or explain what you want them to do.

Eg. Let's take a look at how mother could have reacted when Malitha was in a scuffle with his sister and brother.

"Malitha, let go of your nangi and malli." Saying that, she can physically separate them by pulling his hand or lifting him up and seating him on a chair.

"Now Piume (daughter), and Saviru (younger son) sit on these chairs"

After that, find out the reason for the fight, and if they can solve it themselves. Ask the following question to find out.

"Now tell me, what could you have done instead of fighting with each other?"

Then Malitha says, "Nangi took my box of crayons, got together with malli and broke all of them".

Piume may reply with, "No, I didn't break them. I only used them to colour. Malli broke them".

"Now I don't have a box of crayons. What do I do about my art lesson tomorrow?" Malitha may ask.

"I have five crayons in my box. I'll give them to you aiya (older brother)" says Piume.

"But I had a lot of nice colours in my box. Both of you destroyed it" Malitha cries. He also feels angry about it.

"I'm sorry, I won't do it again" says Piume. Even the younger brother looks at his older brother, aware that he has done something wrong. Then aiya i.e. Malitha feels sorry for his malli and nangi. The sadness he felt about his box of crayons eases.

It would have been worthwhile to have a conversation like this. When parents encourage children and create an environment that is conducive for them to solve their own problems, they also learn and develop the skill to do so.



If we need to intervene in this type of conflict, how should we tackle it?

- 1. First, you need to relax. Then let the children relax. This would be best done by keeping them apart.**

"Putha (son) go to your room now..... Both of you sit here. Stay in your places until I finish talking"

Trying to solve the problem immediately might cause things to take a turn for the worse, therefore it is important to first calm them down. As they spend some time apart, they begin to become more in control of their emotions, and the anger subsides. What we should do next is not to find out who is to be blamed, but to make them realize that all who were involved in the fight are responsible for it. This is very important.

Then, you should cautiously make a decision that creates a win-win situation for everyone, instead of one feeling like they won over the other. By solving problems in this manner, we create an opportunity for the child to develop important skills such as the ability to see the other person's perspective, coming into an agreement and to control emotions such as anger and animosity.



2. Lay down some ground rules and explain acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when resolving conflicts between siblings.

Eg. Keeping your arms and legs to yourself. Do not direct it at another. No name-calling.

No shrieking and no pounding or banging doors.

It is more effective to enforce such rules, rather than look for right and wrong. By doing so we enable the child to understand that s/he is responsible for her/his actions.

3. Ensure that the child knows the consequences they will face if they break these rules.

E.g. If they are fighting to watch TV and arguing about it, remind them that the consequence is that they will both have to forego watching television. So if they break the rule, you must implement the punishment. The punishment will be no television watching.

4. Never respond to violence with violence.

That means when a child is hitting another, avoid hitting the child and saying, “Don’t you dare hit your brother/sister again”. Teach your child through example, by your words and actions. There is no better reward for your child than your love, in order to change her/his behaviour and to teach her/him good habits.

5. Never compare one child with another.

Do not take sides or put down either child.

“Why can’t you be like aiya (older brother)? Has aiya ever fought with anyone? Whilst you on the other hand! Little devil! Not a child.....”



But even with these methods if the fighting does not cease or if you feel that your patience is running out, what can you then do?

In such instances, talk and receive advice from other parents who have faced similar situations. It is important that we share our experiences and skills with other parents so that we support each other and help each other to be equipped to face various situations.

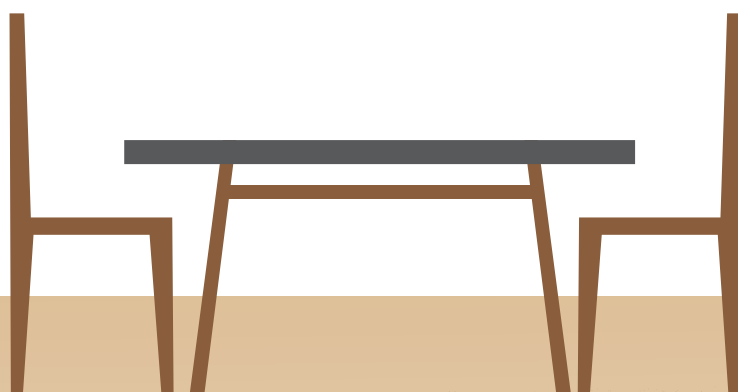
Sometimes children can be very stubborn and fight violently:

- If the child is psychologically affected
- If another member of the family is physically hurt
- If self-esteem and mental wellbeing of a family member is affected or
- If a family member is suffering from a mental illness (eg. depression)
- If a child with special needs is more aggressive

The best option would be to receive advice and help from a psychologist, a child counsellor, a specialist or a clinical psychiatrist at the nearest government hospital.

Contacts:

<https://embermentalhealth.org/ourCohorts/children-adolescent-and-family-services-cafs>

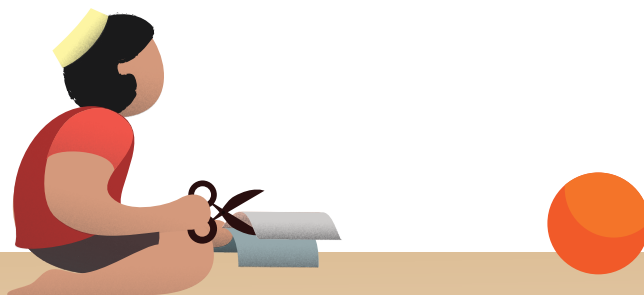


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Notes

Notes



for every child

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Child Protection
3/1 Rajakeeya Mawatha
Colombo 7
Sri Lanka
www.unicef.lk

ISBN : 978-92-806-5108-9

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April 2023

