

S.K.I.P.

Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

# Jealousy and Fighting



**Feelings of jealousy, rivalry and resentment are normal. Parents can help children learn to handle these feelings.**

**“How you  
are with them is  
how they are to  
you and each  
other”**

# New babies

Some children react really strongly when a new baby arrives in the house. Some get very angry, others seem to start behaving like babies themselves and some children treat their little brother or sister with total love.

It's not surprising that small children react this way, especially if they are used to being an only child or the baby in the family. They may feel really threatened by their new brother or sister and feel unloved and ignored.

**“When I  
was burping the  
baby I’d have to  
burp Joe as  
well”**

Preparing together for the birth of a new baby is something you can do together. This way your child will feel involved and important in the family.



# Getting ready for the new arrival

- Start talking about the baby and the birth several months in advance. This works well when the pregnancy is starting to show.
- Answer questions honestly.
- Ask them for their ideas on names and things you need to buy for the baby.
- Make any major changes before the baby comes.  
For example moving your older child out of their cot or bedroom.
- Talk about where the baby will be born and tell them you might have to stay in the hospital for a day or two.

**“Get your older child out of the cot before the new baby is born”**

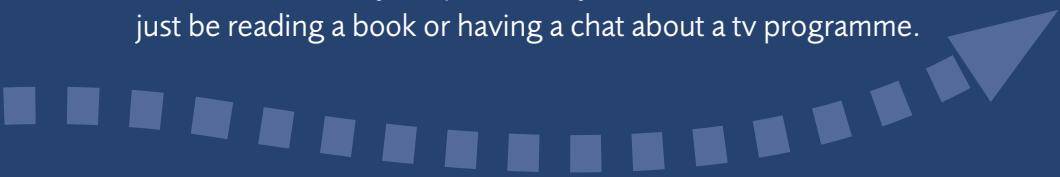
**“We prepared for the new baby together. I put a stool by the change table, we put all the baby clothes in the drawers together.**

**We read lots of books together about new babies. He held him the first day he was born.”**



# When the new baby is born

- Think about putting the baby in a cot, not your arms, when your other child/children visit.
- Let them hold the baby as soon as possible and take photos.
- When you get home ask them to help with bathing, fetching towels etc – although don't make them if they don't want to.
- Your child might enjoy having a washable doll to look after when you are caring for the new baby.
- Ask them what they think the baby should wear (don't give too many choices – "the yellow or the blue one").
- Make time each day to spend with your older children, it could just be reading a book or having a chat about a tv programme.

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- If they do get angry and seem to want to hurt the baby, talk about it. Ask them how they feel and tell them its ok to feel jealous, but tell them it's not ok to hurt the baby.
  - Tell them stories about what happened when they were born and when they were little. Get the baby photos out.



**It's important for them to feel a part of everything. They need to feel important and responsible.**

# Fighting

All brothers and sisters fight, some more than others. Just as with any behaviour, there do need to be limits and boundaries to prevent things getting out of control. Fights usually happen when children are tired, hungry or bored, when they want attention or when they think someone is trying to move in on their possessions. Younger children don't have the skills to solve these problems and may lash out. Children need to learn how to work things out with other people. Parents can help by encouraging communication and problem solving.

**“I spend a lot of time sorting out fights between my boys. I give them separate play areas a lot. If Alex needs to play on his own, we put the gate up in his room so he can play without his little brother wrecking things; I try to teach him to give his brother a toy he can play with, rather than just shoving him away.”**

**“I think we need to see anger as natural - it's how parents deal with it”**

**“If they are bickering, give them space to sort it out”**

# Some ideas

- If your children are squabbling go to another room, giving them space to sort it out. If things settle down without you, tell them they did well. Give them some attention.
- Think about whether they are bored, tired or hungry. Give them something else to do.
- Try and give your children some individual attention so they don't feel they have to compete with each other. Be even with your positive comments.
- Sort out some toys that are special to each child and they don't have to share. It's fine for an older child to have a special toy they don't want someone younger to break.
- Encourage some creative solutions. If they're fighting over crayons suggest they each choose three each, rather than trying to find out who caused the fight.
- Don't investigate who started it. Ask them if they can think of a way of solving the problem.
- Separate without punishment – for example suggest that one plays in one room while the other helps you do something else.
- Don't compare your children, or praise one over the other, but try to make each one feel special and unique.
- Instead of saying "share", say "It's ...'s turn."



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Skip supports parents and caregivers  
to raise their children in a positive way.

For more information go to:

**[www.familyservices.govt.nz/skip/](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/skip/)**

Email: **[skipinfo@msd.govt.nz](mailto:skipinfo@msd.govt.nz)**

or phone: **04 916 3300**

For more information on support for parents go to

**[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)**

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