

Bickering Kids

Question:

We have our 4 kids in our home, and we frequently seem to have the same issue come up between them especially between our 2 youngest—ages 6 and 9. Everything they do together such as, play games, doing chores, riding bikes, doing crafts, almost everything, they get into picking at each other about responses toward each other, assumptions of the other thoughts and actions, and just a lot of disagreeing and bickering. We have removed the things that seem to cause the conflict only to have them move on to the next and have the same issue.

What would be the thing to totally eliminate this from constantly happening? Or at least move in that direction? This is day-to-day and moment-to-moment, so needless to say it is getting quiet frustrating.

Response:

Suppose that they were hitting each other with baseball bats instead of just bickering. What would you do then? Would you be able to get them to stop? I imagine you'd keep a very close eye on them and discipline them in some memorable fashion when they started the hitting. It might happen another time or two, and that would be it if you consistently disciplined them without fail.

The reason bickering can be so hard to control is that we tend to see it as being somewhat acceptable, or even expected. If they brought out the bats we'd be all over it, but somehow we don't tend to take bickering and biting words as seriously.

In reality, most kids will outgrow hitting. However, attitudes of selfishness and negativity cripple many adults. Bickering should be treated every bit as seriously as hitting, if not even more so. If you elevate the seriousness of it in your mind, and escalate your discipline accordingly, you're kids will do the same.

Children are great learners. They do not continually poke themselves in the eye, touch hot pans, or stick paper clips into electrical outlets. They learn quickly that each of these actions bring swift and undesirable consequences into their lives. Our discipline should be no less effective. If our kids are not quickly curbing their behavior after being corrected, then we are not disciplining appropriately.

This goes for bickering, biting, sassing, or any other unpleasant behavior. When we get serious about it, the behavior will stop.