

## How To Deal With Sibling Rifts And Rivalry Because Of Lockdown

Some families are experiencing more rivalry and tension between their children because siblings are spending much more time together than they would usually do.



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As with the rest of society, there are a multitude of ways that lockdowns over the last year have affected families.

From lack of socialising and losing childcare to missing school and grandparents and loved ones, it's been a tough time.

One issue you may also have noticed in your own home is an increased sibling rivalry. In many ways, it makes sense - we've never been more cooped up or under more pressure, it seems like a perfect petri dish for sibling rivalry to breed.

But as a parent, [trapped in the house](#) (or various playgrounds) with them, we can give sympathy, but also could do with some solutions.

Dr Shadi Shahnavaz, head of family therapy at The Soke, has given this advice on how to combat sibling rivalry if you're [ready to tear your hair out](#).

'Some families are experiencing more rivalry and tension between their children because siblings are spending much more time together than they would usually do,' says Dr Shadi.

## **Find Space**

'Some of the tension may be that the younger sibling wants to spend time with their older sibling and the older sibling needs his/her own space. It is important for parents to facilitate a space for each of the children where they can be undisturbed. If they are sharing a bedroom, for example, you can make a schedule of when each child can be in the bedroom for some "me time".

## **Build empathy**

'Building empathy in your children is an important thing as well because it will help them in life in general. One way of doing this is to make sure they understand how their sibling may feel when they lash out at them. As parents we often tell our children what impact their words and actions may have on others, "What you said is hurtful" etc. It's more efficient and powerful to help your child/adolescent try to put words to how they think their words may impact the other. Often your child will say they don't know but you need to persevere and help them put themselves in their siblings' shoes. Make sure you do this in a non-blaming manner and show a great deal of curiosity and support to allow them to do so.

## **Don't tell them off in front of their sibling**

'Never tell your child off in front of the siblings if they are arguing because this causes even more rivalry between them; try to diffuse the situation by distracting them and then on a one to one basis you can talk to each of them and do the above exercise of helping each to "mentalise" the other.