

# SIBLING LOVE

IS THERE A SECRET TO NURTURING A CLOSE BOND AND CUTTING DOWN ON THE RIVALRY BETWEEN YOUR CHILDREN? SARAH BIESKE DID SOME INVESTIGATING



Photo: Baby Buddha Photography

Anyone with a brother or sister knows there's nothing quite like a bit of sibling rivalry. From grudge matches on the tennis court to who can kick the footy the furthest and who had the toy first, kids never have to look too far to find something to squabble over.

But for parents it can be a tough predicament knowing when to step in.

Dr Emily Hill, a clinical psychologist at Chris Mackey and Associates Specialist Psychology Services, says sibling rivalry, conflict and competition are all part of the territory when it comes to family living.

"A degree of sibling rivalry is normal and 'healthy' for a child's development as it provides them with an opportunity to learn important social and cognitive skills, such as patience, respect for others,

negotiation, and compromise," Dr Hill says.

"Conflict between siblings often results from having to share a living space and compete for parental time, affection and attention. It can also be caused by differences in temperament or personality."

She says it's how parents deal with sibling rivalry that is the key to creating a strong sibling relationship.

While rivalry tends to begin at an early age, when first-borns have to learn to share not only their toys but also their parents, it can sometimes persist into older years depending on how parents respond to these conflicts.

Dr Hill encourages parents not to take sides but instead give their children the tools to sort out their conflicts themselves.



Photo: Louisa Jones Photography