## Settle sibling disagreements with six-step process

o your kids fight over who gets to sit in the front seat of the car, or what movie they want to watch,

Corner

Sibling disagreements come and go. It's best for siblings to work out disputes for themselves, but sometimes they can't.
Ongoing troubles can be resolved with

resolved with a problem solving meet-

sottle a problem solving meeting. This 6-step process can help settle the worst of your kids' disputes. Let's take a look at how problem solving wurks. As we go through the setys, 171 share ny first esperience using the problem solving method.

My kids, age three and six at he time, were fighting over toys. It happened several times aday every day. I tried to let them work it out for themselves, but the problem got worse. Under the problem got worse. Under a particularly nasty fight over a particularly nasty fight over a particularly nasty fight over a period my limit. Step one: Call the kids to be a helpful mediator. Explain the purpose of the

to be a helpful mediator. Explain the purpose of the meeting and set up any ground

meeting and set up my meeting rules.

I said to my kids, 'There has been a lot of fighting over toys, and I can see how unhappy it's making you. We are going to have a problem solving meeting to come up with some solutions that both of you can be happy with. During the meeting, there

will be no name calling and no interrupting when someone is speaking. You'll both have turns

speaking. You it boom nave com-to talk."

I didn't know if the meeting would really work, but I was willing to try just about any-thing to end the fighting. Step two: Explore the prob-lem from your children's point of view. Ask each child to describe the problem. Write down everything they say. When they're finished, read back what you have written. I asked Alex, "What do you think the problem is?"
I have nothing to say, he said.

I thought to myself, "Maybe this method won't work. Maybe a three-year-old is too young for it."

a three-year-old is too young for it."

I moved to Lance. He said, 'Whenever I'm playing with something, Alex comes along and takes it. He always wants what I have. He attacks me all the ..."

As Lance was talking, Alex interrupted, 'You're the one that..."

I stopped him by saying, 'Alex, you will get an opportunity to say everything you want, after Lance is finished. Lance continued. 'When I get up to get another toy or go to the bathroom, Alex face fushed the continued when I try to get it hack, he goes crazy. He hits and scratches me.

I asked Alex if he had anything to say. Alex said, "Lance
hurts me. He's too strong, He
grabs stuff. Then, i get so mad.
I have to fight. Sometimes, I see
a toy on the floor and he's not
even there, so I play with it.
Then he comes in and pulls it
out of my hand."
Tears filled his eyes. It was
hard for me to keep my own
opinions to myself. I had seen
Alex wait 'til Lance wasn't looking, then snatch his toy and I asked Alex if he had any-

run. I had also seen Lance force toys out of Alex's hands and laugh with victory. While the kids were talking, I was writing down their words. After the boys were finished, I read back what they had said. They were delighted to hear their words read back. They seemed to feel respected and really take in the words I read. Step three: Give each child a chance to add anything they wish to say. "Is there anything you'd like to add?" I saked them.

Lance said, "Maybe sometimes Alex doesn't know I was playing with something, but he shouldn't hur me. I only hurt him when he hurts me. I try to tell him, hut he won't listen."

Lance said, "Lance talks and talks and I can't say what I

talks and I can't say what I want fast enough, then we fight." I read back what they had

added. Letting the kids express themselves left them feeling

themselves left them feeling understood. I said, "This is a tough situation. Left sput our heads together, and come up with some workshile solutions."

Step four: Write down a list of possible solutions.

Encourage your kids to come up with as many ideas as possible, and feel free to add some of your own. Pass no judgment on their ideas. This will only inhibit better ideas from flowing. If a child doesn't like an idea. child doesn't like an idea remind them that you're writ-

ing down all ideas. Here are the ideas the kids

Here are the ideas the kids and I came up with:

1. Alex can't touch any toy without asking me first.
(Lance's idea)

2. If someone is playing, you can't grab the toy away. (Alex's idea)

3. Take turns with toys you both want to play with. (My idea)

both want to pa, idea)
4. Set up a safety zone for

Sosnowski-Whitsitt

Sosnowski-Whitsitt

A fall wedding is planned for Amy Lauren Sosnowski and Tom Whitsitt in St. Clair, Mich.

The bride-to-be is the daughter of Loraine Sosnowski of Farmington Hills and the fate Tom Sosnowski. She is a graduate of Michigan State University and is currently pursuing teaching certification at Marygrove College. Her fiance is the son of Allan and Catherine Whitsitt of Marysville, Mich. He is a graduate of St. Clair County Community College and is currently a facilitator at Daimlerchrysler.

The couple will make their home in Marysville.

toys you don't want to share.
(Lance's idea)
5. No hitting, (Lance's idea)
Step five: Together, decide
which ideas are acceptable to
all of you. Alex wouldn't agree
to the first idea on the list. We
crossed it off. The safety zone
idea appealed to both hids.
They agreed to use the space
under their kitchen chairs as
the safety zone. To avoid a
mountain of off-limit toys, we
agreed to no more than three
toys in the safety zone at a time.
I asked them to shake hands
on their new agreement. The
boys were so happy. There was
a warmth between them that I
hadn't seen in a long time.
Step six: Schedule a follow up
time to evaluate how things are
going. It's easier for kids to follow new rules if they know
there will be an opportunity to
reevaluate and change things
that aren't working.
I told the boys that we would
meet again in one week. I
hoped this problem-solving
meeting would help, but I was a
war-torm mom, and I didn't
want to get my hopes up. To my
surprise, the boys followed the
rules, they had more interest in
following them.
At the follow-up meeting
they chose to continue the new
rule. They also added a "threeday rule." Any new toy a child
received would be off limits to
his brother for three days,
unless they chose to share it.
For over six years, I had toyunder my kitchen chairs. It was
worth it. The boys found a way
to turn conflict into cooperation.

points, and consider creative ways of handling difficulties. Sibling relationships improve when parents believe in their kid's abilities to resolve conflicts and give them the skills to MsSuttle

personal growth seminars to business and educational settings, E-mail her at MSSuffle @aot.com or visit her web site http://members.aot.com/

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## **ENGAGEMENTS**

Meloche-Buatti Christine and Robert Meloche of Livonia

Meloche of Livonia announce the engagement of their daughter Jennifer to Darren Buatti, son of Dianne and Ed Buatti of Farmington Hills.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of Livonia Stevenson and Western Michigan University. She is currently employed by Orchards Children's Services as a foster home developer/social worker. She also works part-time at Bath & Body Works.

Her finnee' is a graduate Her finnee' is a graduate of the she works and the she works and the she works and the she works.

Works.

Her finnee is a graduate
of North Farmington High School and Eastern Michigan
University. He is currently employed by Verizon Wireless as an
account executive.

A September wedding is planned at the Chapel of Our Lady of Orchard Lake followed by a reception at Farmington Hills Manor.

Got an idea for a story? E-mail us at jhubred@oe.homecomm.net



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