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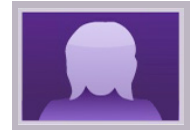
The Rule of Respect

Susan Hodara



Susan Hodara

Interview by Susan Hodara



Tired of arbitrating your daughters' squabbles? Here's how one family is working it out:

Andrea: "About a year ago, Kira and Sophie were constantly fighting. Their arguing would escalate, and I would have to intervene. I had to find a way to resolve their fights without being both judge and jury."

Kira: "My sister and I were fighting a little too much, and it didn't stop unless my mom got involved."

Andrea: "On one particularly bad day, I told the girls we were going to try a respect rule. The rule says that if one sister is doing something—anything from tickling or blocking the TV to burping at the dinner table—that upsets the other sister, she has to stop if her sister asks her to. If she doesn't stop, her sister can say, 'remember the respect rule.'"

Kira: "When my sister is making me angry, using the respect rule can be better than just fighting."

Andrea: "It's a verbal sign that says, 'Please stop, I've had enough!'"

Kira: "Right. It's like having your mom in the room without her actually being there. But sometimes I'm not doing anything, and Sophie yells, 'Respect rule!' like I'm committing a crime. You should only use the respect rule if the other person isn't listening to you. My sister is only 6, but he can say it in a superior voice that makes me mad. It's better to say it calmly."

Andrea: "If you are whining or have a bossy attitude, invoking the respect rule can be just as annoying as the action you're trying to stop. It took some time for the girls to learn that."

Kira: "I think it works pretty well, but it can't solve every problem. Sisters fight—it's sad but true."

Andrea: "The rule has reduced the need for me to be involved in their fights. Beyond that, I think it teaches the girls that they have the right to say 'no' to anyone who is bothering them, and to expect to be heard."



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