



# Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by LifeBalance Solutions



A program of Lifetrack

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February 2016

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## Easing Sibling Rivalry

One of the most valuable things for parents to know about sibling rivalry is that the emotions children feel, and the behaviors they demonstrate, are perfectly normal. Most children quickly adjust to a new baby and begin to feel pride and pleasure at being the “big” brother or sister. Unfortunately, this is usually a rather short, tranquil phase that leads to a period of stress when that sweet little baby begins to get up, walk around and compete in a number of new ways.

When dealing with children’s feelings about their siblings, the immaturity of their thinking comes into play. For example, he may feel that if you fill his little brother’s bowl too full of cereal, there won’t be enough left for him.

What can you do to ease sibling rivalry?

**Demonstrate your love.** Spend some time alone with each child every day. It doesn’t have to be long or formal, but each child should know he has time with you each day.

**Reminisce with your child.** Talk about how life was for you and him when he was the age of his younger sibling. Show him pictures of himself, especially the ones with you, and tell



him how much you enjoyed being with him then and now.

**Think of this period as a developmental necessity.** Remember that sibling rivalry is normal. It may help you stay calm as your child struggles through the complicated emotions of love, hate and competition. These are normal feelings for his sibling.

Sibling rivalry does not simply go away at a certain time. In fact, many adults still have residues of sibling rivalry. It’s usually hardest, however, for young children.

*Source: “3 Tips for Parents to Ease Sibling Rivalry,” the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota, <http://cehdvision2020.umn.edu/cehd-blog/sibling-rivalry/>, October 4, 2013.*

## Bonding is Essential

The process of bonding with a new baby is natural for most mothers. Often, within hours of birth, mothers report feelings of overwhelming love and attachment for their new baby. New fathers may feel less confident than new mothers around a baby, and can feel excluded by the close relationship that develops between the mother and baby. Like mothers, fathers need quiet time to hold their new babies close, gaze into their eyes, talk to them and comfort them when distressed. Fathers may wish to take walks with their babies tucked into a Snuggli-type carrier or simply hold a quiet baby while reading or watching tv.

But what if babies and their mothers are separated at birth, as when babies are premature or ill and need special care? Or babies placed for adoption who may not meet their adoptive parent(s) for quite some time after birth. Humans have many opportunities to bond appropriately throughout the first years of life. We know that mothers who adopt babies and even older children are able to form normal attachment relationships.

When a caregiver consistently responds to an infant’s needs, a trusting relationship and lifelong attachment develops. This sets the stage for the

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help me



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or go to [www.helpmegrowmn.org](http://www.helpmegrowmn.org)



## Promote Learning While Traveling

Most of us ride in a car, on a bus or train, as part of our daily routine. This can be a nice “together-time” for you and your child. Turn riding time into talking, singing, playing and learning time!

If you have a baby or young toddler, try these activities:

**Ride and sing.** Your child loves the sound of your voice and she does not care if you can’t sing. Sing popular rhymes like, “Twinkle, twinkle, little star...” You can also sing songs that you remember from your childhood.

**Fast and slow.** You can use the motion of the vehicle to help your child learn describing words. As the car moves, change the sound of your voice. For example, as the car speeds up, you can say, “Fast, fast!” as you say the words fast. As the car or bus slows down, you can say, “Slow, slow” as you make your voice very slow.

**So much to see.** Once your toddler can see out the window from the car seat, the view provides lots of places and things to name. “There’s the mall!” As you name things you pass, give some information that relates the place or thing to your child. For example, say “That’s where we bought your new shoes!”

For preschoolers, try these activities:

**Reading signs.** As you ride, point out large signs that are not familiar. Name the pictures and read the words. For



example, “Look at that grocery store sign! It says apples are on sale.” Then talk about the words and spell them together. “A-P-P-L-E spells apple!”

**License to ride.** License plates and signs are great things to use for learning letters and numbers. Go on a letter hunt and invite your child to spell a word that she knows, like her name.

**Ride and read.** Keep some familiar children’s picture books in the car for your child to look at. Your child can look at the pictures and tell you the story in her own way.

**Radio ride.** Find a radio station with music that you and your child both like. Listen to the music, and sing along if there are words. If not, talk about how the music sounds and how it makes you feel.

Source: “Reading Activities in the Car,” <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-activities/reading-activities-in-the-car/>, retrieved January 2016.

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growing child to enter healthy relationships with other people throughout life and to appropriately experience and express a full range of emotions.

Contrary to popular thinking of past generations, responding quickly to crying by holding and nursing will not “spoil” a baby. Instead, babies who are held and comforted when they need it during the first six months of life tend to be more secure and confident as toddlers and older children.

Seek help if you feel that bonding is not progressing as it should. Ask your health care provider about any concerns.

Source: “Bonding is Essential for Normal Infant Development,” by Mary Beth Steinfeld, M.D., UC Davis Medical Center, [http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/medicalcenter/healthtips/20100114\\_infant-bonding.html](http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/medicalcenter/healthtips/20100114_infant-bonding.html), 2014.

## Test Your Knowledge!

- 1) T F A car ride can be nice “together-time” for you and your child.
- 2) T F Sibling rivalry simply goes away at a certain time in a child’s life.
- 3) T F When a caregiver consistently responds to an infant’s needs, a trusting relationship and lifelong attachment develops.