



A Heart For All Students

Podcast Episode Transcription

AHEART #27 Dealing With Sibling Rivalry In A Life-Giving Way

Hey, friend, in today's episode, I'm going to answer another question from Sweet Jessica, from A Heart For All Students private community. She asks me all about the big loaded question. How do I deal with sibling rivalry? She tells me, Hey, my oldest is constantly picking on my youngest. My youngest starts screaming. Their dynamic drives me absolutely crazy and I pretty much almost lose my momma mind. And what I love about Jessica is her transparency because, "What mom hasn't lost their mind on their kids?". What Mom hasn't tried to solve the sibling rivalry thing. I struggle with it all the time and we lose it because we're just people, too.

So in today's episode, even though I know we're not going to solve the dynamics of sibling rivalry this side of heaven, I do my best to offer my best strategies and support in order to help walk alongside our kids. And my strategies for us as mommies to really navigate what's going on inside of ourselves so that we can respond rather than react. And I'm telling you, I am not perfect in this area. It's just one step in front of the other. And find out about "Peacemaker Points". That's a strategy I used in my home and it was really helpful. So be encouraged. Check out the episode and connect with me at www.aheartforallstudents.com. I would love to hear from you. Have a great day.

Hi and welcome to A Heart For All Students podcast. I'm your host Lindsay Livingston. Each week, we're going to discover how to parent and educate our uniquely designed outside-the-box, kids to thrive as the people God has designed them to be.

If you are a mom raising a child who simply doesn't fit into the box of the world's expectations, this is a place for you. Whether your child has ADHD, ASD, SPD, GAD, or no acronym at all, your child has been intentionally designed with gifts, passions and purpose by the God who loves them deeply. It's my honor to work alongside you by providing actionable strategies, tips, encouragement and support as you homeschool and raise your uniquely designed child to thrive.

My first question is from Sweet Jessica, and she says, "My oldest is picking on my youngest. Youngest, age four, whines and cries when he's annoyed and that gets under mom's skin". Totally get it. How do I react? I tell the older one how to get his attention or to figure out how to get along. My oldest can't seem to find an activity that he can that can keep himself busy without a scream.

So I really love how she owned her own reaction, which is huge, huge, huge, huge. Because a lot of times we just want to like yell at the kids and that does nothing. It helps nobody. So it's really we have to get ourselves together mentally so that we can appropriately help our kids along through these difficult things. Sibling rivalry is brutal. It is so hard not to get involved in the sibling rivalry. I am still working on it. So I am not an expert by any means in this. I can only use what I've learned to help frame the way that I approach my kids.

OK, so the oldest picking on the youngest. The youngest whines and cries and gets under your skin. So the first thing that I would do for yourself is: I think it's awesome that you recognize the fact that it is driving you insane. Then when you have time, when you have a minute or two. You know, probably more than two minutes, maybe like five, ten minutes to yourself. Even if you lock yourself in the bathroom, really try to process through.

OK, what about it? Is driving you insane the noise. Yes, I get it. But is it that you're feeling like you should be able to stop it and therefore since you should be able to stop it in your own head, you feel like you should be able to stop it. And therefore, are you hearing in your head that you're a bad mom? Because I can tell you that I have felt that myself, that my kids fighting triggered something in me that said, well, our kids shouldn't be fighting, which of course, nobody likes fighting. But we also need to know, OK, what is it triggering in us so that therefore we can see a little bit more clearly.

So I love the fact that you owned the part about your own reaction. But the first thing I would do, I guess, in the moment is I would definitely walk away. I would walk into another room and I would take several deep breaths for yourself. And just, you know, if you are a believer, I would just beg God, help me, help me, help me to see what you want me to see in this. We want to find out again, and I know it sounds cheeseball because I talk about this a lot, but we really want to talk about or figure out what is behind the behavior.

What is going on with your oldest? What is he frustrated about? What is he emotional about? Why is he picking on his little brother? We don't know the reasons. And I am not saying that we ask those

questions in order to excuse the behavior, but if we have information, then we can bring it to our child and help equip them.

So I would have a conversation with my oldest privately. I would do everything I possibly can to create a moment, something enjoyable. Even if it's ten minutes outside, just the two of you. Find a way to capture a few minutes just with that child, to enjoy some time together and then broach the subject.

Hey, buddy, I noticed that you are really struggling with your little brother. What's going on? Are you looking for his attention? Do you feel like he's not paying attention to you? Do you feel, are you feeling bad? What's going on in your head? Let's talk about it, because I know it doesn't feel good for you to have to constantly be fighting with your brother. Try to, like, engage him in the conversation. Ask questions. Let him know that you hear him.

Now, just on a practical level, I utilized the strategy with my girls when they were younger and because my girls are older now, but one of the strategies I use is I called them Peacemaker Points. OK, this is just a practical, where you're going to create a sense of collaboration between your two boys by doing what we called Peacemaker Points. And Scripture talks about being a peacemaker. Now peacemaker isn't a peacekeeper. A peacekeeper, is someone who just avoids conflict at all costs, even to the detriment of others.

And that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about a peacemaker. We're talking about raising your children to understand the value that God holds in being a peacemaker. Being someone that can look over someone else's offensive. So a little brother drives him crazy. Older brother is actually honoring God or honoring just the family as a whole unit because he's the older one. And he's going to look over and he's going to not always get triggered by his little brother's annoying behaviors because little brothers are little.

So Peacemaker Points, how we did in our houses, I just had a whiteboard. I actually had a whiteboard calendar that was just in the kitchen and just at the top I wrote Peacemaker Points. And when I saw my children engaging each other well, giving each other grace, not responding to the annoying little things that the other one did, I would literally in their presence, I would just stand up and grab a marker and just add a peacemaker point. And so that would get tallied over the week. And I picked a certain number of tally marks that they would get. And if they got, I don't know, say it was 10 or 15, it's all dependent on you.

There was something together that collaboratively they would agree upon that they were earning together and that helped them and gave them an external motivation, but also helped them recognize the times when the other one was giving the other one grace. When the other one was being extra kind. And because that happened, because of that Peacemaker Point process, it helped the kids work together. They had a common goal and it was very, very effective.

Now it does require parenting involvement and it requires you to really focus in on finding your children, loving each other well. But I promise you, it will yield fruit even if you challenge yourself each morning. OK, I'm going to do this for one week. I hit my goal today. Lord, help me is to seek out those opportunities, seek out those moments where my children are loving each other well. And obviously you can have a conversation about these Peacemaker Points. That's something that worked really well with my girls. And I recommend that you do that.

And I recommend that you have a conversation beforehand with your children about rising up to be the people that God has called them to be. So I hope that's helpful.

Hey sweet friend. Do you desperately want to be a good Christian Mama? But daily just feel like a failure? You love your child deeply and you want her to thrive but there's just one problem. Your kid has meltdowns over everything, every single day.

Friend, I have been there and I get it and I'm on the other side. That's why I've created the Free 5 Day Devotional for you. Find hope and a new way to approach your child's toughest behaviors. Be encouraged and grab your free copy at www.Bit.ly/exhaustedmomhope

Hey friend, guess what? You just finished an entire episode. Give yourself a pat on the back. In this season of parenting, where we are barely surviving, every accomplishment is a victory. So take it. And while you're at it, if you found this episode to be helpful, please consider leaving a review on iTunes or wherever you listen to your podcast episode and don't forget to subscribe, so you never miss a thing...

And if you're looking for more practical tools and encouragement as you homeschool and parent your outside-the-box child to thrive, go to www.aheartforallstudents.com. There are tons of resources, freebies and lots of extra support over there. Don't miss anything. I don't do this thing alone. Friends were in it together and together we can change the narrative for our neurodiverse outside-the-box kids.