

Banning the Blame Game

by Lisa McKimm



Have you ever listened from another room, whilst two of your kids start to wind up for an all out battle?

Parents have an unspoken way of making judgement calls on such occasions. Depending on the pitch and the anger that they can hear coming from the kids they follow their intuition about whether they should intervene or not.

Some days they know that it's just 'recreational arguing', and will be forgotten before the dust has died down. But on other occasions they know that someone is about to get hurt. They 'feel it in their water' as my Gran used to say!

In these instances, parents begin their fast strides towards the source of the kaffuffle, determined to sort the culprit out. Often the first words blurted by the parent (or those shortly thereafter) are 'RIGHT! WHO STARTED IT?' Instantly sensing that whoever started it is about to be for the high jump, they both point at each other and yell 'HE DID!'

This is the ideal moment for parents to come to grips with a very small number of simple home truths. There is in fact a basic sequence of events that is almost guaranteed to happen.

1. As your kids see the anger in your walk, and hear it in your voice - they know that they do not want to be on the receiving end of it.
2. As they probably do truly believe (from their perspective) that the other one started it - they will almost certainly point the finger of blame at them.
3. They will both think that the other one is lying to dump the blame, and any liability that goes with it, unfairly on their heads.
4. The kids may hold onto resentments towards each other because of this.
5. If you believe either one of them, you have probably just dented your relationship with the other one!
Hmmm . . . Not really worth it, is it!

Of course, possibly most important of all, you have only taught them about blame, and not about responsibility.

Instead, you could try approaching it this way.

When you hear the kids winding up into something that's heading towards violence, walk calmly to the scene of the crime! Say 'Hey, I can see two kids who are very mad about something - let's see if we can all work it out together'.

Then turn to one of them and say 'Would you like to tell me what you think the problem is?' If the other one interrupts in disagreement (which can often happen even with grown ups who are in a stinky mood!) just calmly say 'I know honey, you've probably got a slightly different story, and I'm going to listen to yours too in a moment'.

Awesome athletes get coaching, why shouldn't awesome parents!! Want to be an awesome parent?

After listening to both kids, you can often see that no individual was totally at fault. Wires get crossed, and assumptions get made that can just create a problem sometimes.

The key thing is where you choose to take the kids next. I believe that it has to be - look for a Win/Win solution.

Try saying to the kids 'Mmmm, can anyone think of an idea so that you can both be happy?' With a bit of coaching and practice, amazingly quick strides can be taken in learning this skill. It's a great skill to learn for life.

Think of its applications in the classroom or with friends now, or with a partner or in the workplace in the future.

Remember that your kids are learning their life-skills in your lounge every day. Don't pass up the opportunity to equip them well.

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