

**Navigating conflict  
with your sibling:**  
a practical guide for  
young people

**Our practical guide will provide explanations and practical tips about the following topics:**

- Common reasons for conflict in sibling relationships
- Tips on navigating conflict with a sibling
- Where you can find support for your mental health and wellbeing


## Common reasons for conflict in sibling relationships

We might love our siblings, but that doesn't mean we always get along with them. We might have a shared history, but that doesn't mean we are the "same". In fact, many siblings are really quite different, and that's perfectly okay.

If your relationship with your sibling is a tricky one, you are not alone. There are many reasons for conflict in sibling relationships, such as:

- **Unhealthy competition** - You might find yourself fighting to compete physically, socially, academically, or even just to get more attention from a parent/family member.
- **Blended family issues** - You might be getting used to a new stepsibling being part of your family when your parents have recently married or moved in together.
- **Feeling like a sibling is favoured in your family** - You might experience your sibling being treated differently from you, and that can feel unfair.
- **Expectations from parents** - You might feel like there are unfair expectations for different siblings. For example, being the oldest sibling in your household might mean extra chores or responsibilities, like taking care of younger siblings, that could contribute to tensions.
- **Issues with space** - A lack of space at home might mean sharing spaces for sleeping, socialising, eating, or doing homework, which could lead to increased tension between you.

Of course, there might be other more serious reasons for sibling difficulties that can even result in verbal abuse, physical abuse, and emotional trauma. If this is happening to you, or you don't feel safe around a sibling for another reason, we encourage you to reach out to an adult you trust for support, as this type of behaviour is not okay.



## Tips on navigating conflict with a sibling

We've put together some tips that might be a helpful starting point if you're experiencing sustained difficulties with your sibling. However, we recognise that every sibling relationship is unique and these tips might not necessarily be effective for every situation.

### **Gently explore what the underlying issues might be**

If you've noticed that your relationship is full of conflict recently, exploring the root cause can be helpful. You might consider:

- whether you or your sibling have any additional stress that might be affecting your moods - for example, exams, friendship issues, problems at school.
- if there's an unresolved argument between you and difficult feelings still remain.
- or perhaps there are practical reasons why the arguments between you might have increased - for example, you share a room and possibly feel like you have no personal space to mentally unwind.

Whatever the reasons, gently exploring them can help you express how you feel, help you deal with unresolved conflict, and even help you think about practical solutions to your problems.



## **Respect each other's space**

Whether you have your own personal space at home or you have to share it, setting some boundaries can be a helpful way to live alongside each other peacefully. Carefully thinking about your boundaries together and trying to stick to them can make a real difference.

Respecting each other's space doesn't just have to mean physical space either. You may have some rules about virtual spaces, too. For example, you might decide to have a rule about not posting about each other on social media without asking first.

## **Accept your differences**

You might be siblings, but that doesn't mean you will always think the same way or have the same reactions to difficult situations. Sometimes, tensions come from a place of wanting the other person to react or think a certain way, but accepting and respecting differences is often a good way to see each other's unique qualities.

## **Communicate something you appreciate about them**

We can sometimes find ourselves in an unhelpful cycle with our family members. If you're finding yourself constantly being irritated by your sibling, try breaking the cycle by finding something you appreciate about them.

You might disagree with their viewpoints, or feel annoyed by something they said or did, but how can you find some balance in order to improve your relationship?

Do they have a quality or skill that you admire or appreciate? It sounds like a small step, but it can really make a difference to shift your usual patterns of how you view and interact with your sibling.



## Support is available

You can check if Kooth is available in your area by visiting [kooth.com](https://kooth.com) and selecting “**Join Kooth**” to get started. Here are some reasons you might want to join:

- We're completely free to use.
- You're anonymous to us.
- No bullying or trolling takes place on our site.
- You don't need any kind of referral to join.
- Signing up and getting started only takes a few minutes.
- No problem is too small for us to listen to.

If Kooth isn't available in your area and you need support, we recommend exploring the following support options:

- [SHOUT](#)
  - [Childline](#)
  - [NHS Choices](#)
  - [Samaritans](#)
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