

Managing Busy Siblings



I have never met an older child that did not in some ways boss around his or her younger siblings. It is a natural and in some ways healthy activity for older children to do. Your older child is trying his or her best to understand and relate to the world around as well as younger siblings. Bossiness often is a result of that.

However, when you have a child that is constantly barking orders at and demanding that brothers and sisters do what they are told, it is important to teach your child how to treat others. The first place you look

at is yourself.

Children ALWAYS mimic and imitate what they see adults doing. If your child has experienced a lot of “bossiness” from mom, dad or other caregivers, it is likely that he or she is going to pick up these habits. Children are amazing mirrors to our own bad habits and issues. If you examine yourself and find that you often times give too many orders to your children, begin to change the way you talk with them.

This is much easier to say than to do. Once you are aware of this you will begin to catch yourself giving commands and orders. Do your best in those moments to stop and rephrase what you have just said. “Pick up your shoes!” becomes “Allie, could you please pick up your shoes?” After a while of consistently stopping yourself after you blurt out the command, you will begin to hear yourself mid-sentence. Then you will begin to stop yourself just as you are giving the order. Eventually you will naturally ask in a kind way.

There are going to be times as a parent that asking a question is not appropriate, because asking a questions means that your child’s answer can be NO. When this is the case use one of the two following phrases. “Let’s pick up your shoes together.” This is obviously when there is an activity you will be doing together. You can also use the phrase “I need you to pick up your shoes.” Use of the word “I” shows that you understand that picking up the shoes is not something your child has a need to do but is something you, the parent or caregiver needs.

If you have examined yourself and find that you already ask your child to do things and you do not “boss” her around, there are a few other things to look at. She might be picking up on you talking to other people in that manner or even talking to pets that way. Children see the world very different than us and it is important to look at it from their perspective.

Older children are often given more responsibilities in and around the house. This is often times a necessity, and it can be beneficial for both you and your child. It allows you to have a little help and it gives your child new experiences and self-esteem. However, in your child’s mind that elevated responsibility needs to come with more control. So if you are giving your child extra responsibilities around the house, he or she also need to have more control over what happens in life. If your child is not given more control, he or she will begin to take it. One way that happens is through bossing younger siblings.