

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting Has Someone Been Dethroned?



BY KIM DeMARCHI

Do you remember when you had only your first born child and then decided to have a second child? In your mind, did you envision your children playing nicely together, getting along, laughing, treating each other with respect,

and always having each other's backs? Oh, the thought of sweet siblings! You may have envisioned that scenario, but what's really happening in your house now with a new baby?

There's a funny cartoon drawing of a toddler with his dog, and in walk his parents through the front door carrying a new baby smiling lovingly. The toddler says to his dog, "I knew it was too good to last." Imagine your first born being your only child. He is the center of your universe, getting all of your attention at his every whim. His basic needs are all fulfilled all of the time. He feels loved, has a sense of belonging, and feels like he has a place in the family. You lavish him with love, affection and attention. All is right in his world.

Fast forward a couple of years to the above mentioned cartoon. You bring home a new baby and now who's getting all the attention? Imagine how difficult it must be for your first born who is seeing and hearing all of it constantly. This is the concept of dethronement. He has literally been dethroned by his new sibling. He is no longer the one sitting on the throne. His baby sister or brother has taken over. Your first child has lost his place in the family and is shopping for a new way to belong.

There are many ways he could regain your attention in this situation. He could become the pleaser and be extremely helpful. He could regress and become a "baby" again, wanting a bottle, to be carried, sleep in a crib again, etc... Another viable option is he could become hurtful and seek revenge on the baby. Many choose the last option. Many hurt their baby sibling by hitting, pinching, and/or grabbing things from them. That elicits the

big reaction we know all too well from the parent. "Stop that! Look what you did! You hurt your baby sister and made her cry! What is the matter with you? Go to your room now!" Then, you turn to the baby and begin to pamper and comfort her with hugs and kisses galore. "Are you okay, you poor sweet thing?"

If parents continue to react to the oldest child's behavior in this manner over the next few days, months, and years, this child might grow up to be a bully or to be constantly trying to control others. He has learned to do something bad to get attention. On the flip side, the baby sister is getting attention for being helpless, being the victim, and needing to be rescued. The way that we interact with our children now contributes to their developing patterns now for their adult life. Do you want to create bullies and victims?

So, what can you do to help the older child still have a sense of belonging? Enlist their help and assistance with the baby from the very start. Offer your oldest even more Genuine Encounter Moments (Aug. 2013) to build and retain connection. Allow him to express both positive and negative emotions about the baby. Empathize with his feelings. Make sure he feels heard and understood.

For all you mamas out there reading this, imagine your husband bringing home a new wife. She is younger, thinner, smarter, prettier, and funnier than you. He asks you to share all your clothes, jewelry, furniture, kitchen, home and car with her. Then he leaves you cleaning up the dishes while he is laughing and cuddling with wife #2 in the other room! How are you feeling about this new wife moving in? What do you feel like doing



to her? I know what I'd like to do to her! Keep this perspective in mind; this is what your child often times experiences with a new baby in the house. And we wonder why our first born asks, "When is the baby going back?" Look forward to the next two issues dedicated to more sibling issues: Tools for dealing with the fighting, as well as How to Minimize the Rivalry and Maximize the Relationship.

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To Parenting: Helping Parents Navigate their Parenting Journey. Kim's goal for you is to help reduce conflict, foster mutual respect, and create deeper communication and connections with your loved ones. She can be reached through www.EmpoweredParenting.com or www.PassportToParenting.com.