

Solving problems versus blaming

“When an argument does arise, I try not to put the blame on anyone; I never ask ‘Whose fault is it?’ but rather look for a solution where everyone is happy. It helps because it doesn't produce angry feelings towards a sibling, as a ‘blamed one’ would tend to have. Also, as no one is blamed, no one ‘gets in trouble.’ My kids play together almost all day, usually getting along great.” - Helena

There's a wonderful New Yorker cartoon of a family lost in the jungle. The father is saying *“I admit we're lost, but the most important thing right now is ... figuring out whose fault it is!”* When things go wrong, most of us automatically start blaming someone. We feel slightly better, because even though something is wrong, we're doing something about—figuring out why it happened! In many families, blame is so habitual that we don't even notice it.

- *“Who made this mess?”*
- *“It's your own fault for teasing him.”*
- *“Which one of you started this?”*

We often think when we blame that we're doing something positive—holding someone accountable, teaching responsibility. But when kids grow up in a household where blame is a way of life, they're more defensive, more inclined to watch their back, and more inclined to blame and attack than to take responsibility. Not surprisingly, families who focus on solutions instead of blame raise children who have better sibling relationships. One study found that *“When families are generally harmonious even when discussing problems, siblings are likely to develop less conflicted relationships.”*ⁱ

The solution? Commit to a no-blame household. Every time you start to assign blame, teach yourself to ask *“What can we do to solve this?”* instead.

Excerpted from the [Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids WORKBOOK](#) by Dr. Laura Markham

ⁱ Brody, G.H., Stoneman, Z., McCoy, J.K., & Forehand, R. (1992). *Contemporaneous and Longitudinal Associations of Sibling Conflict with Family Relationship Assessments and Family Discussions about Sibling Problems*. Child Development, 63, 391-400.