

Family Fighting

Dear Bob & Tiffany,

My mom and my brother fight a lot. They yell and scream at each other. They will not stop fighting. I don't know what to do. I am scared that they might start hitting each other. One side of me is angry and the other is sad. How can I make them stop fighting with each other? – I am Scared

Wow! That's pretty heavy. It must be hard watching people you love hurting each other with their words and actions. You're not in an easy situation, because I'm sure it's all too easy to get caught in the middle of it all and have people wanting you to take sides.

I would encourage you to remember that you can't control their responses. While you can and should let them know how their fighting makes you feel, you alone will not be able to make them stop. The choice is ultimately up to them. Have you talked to them about it? If not, I would ask them to find a time where the three of you could sit down and talk. The best time to share your feelings with them is not when they're having a fight. Emotions are too heightened at that time, and usually the only feelings that get expressed are anger. When you step back from it a little and really examine your feelings about it, you'll find that there are a lot of other feelings underneath there too (hurt, sadness, fear, etc...). They probably don't even realize how their fighting is affecting you, and while it may be hard for them to hear, they need to know. When sharing your feelings, always share them in love, without accusations or blaming. Love should always be your motivation.

Then there needs to be an agreement on how to handle differences without explosive anger. Brainstorm together about how to do that. I have a friend who sat down with her two kids and they came up with a family constitution. They all signed it and each have a copy of it, as well as one that is framed and hanging in their dining room as a reminder.

I know something that has really helped me when I'm feeling anxious about something is to pray for peace. I'm not sure how "into" praying you are, but I know it helps me. If the situation does ever get violent, *PLEASE* seek out some help. You can contact your school counselor or youth pastor, or maybe a trusted teacher. You can't expect to take on the responsibility of being the referee between your mom and brother. That's not your job. Your responsibility is to love and respect both of them through this, even if their actions are sometimes disrespectful.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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