



Kids Fighting in the Car

1. Be consistent in your reaction to car bickering

Each of us has a different tolerance level for car fighting. Regardless of what yours is, you must be consistent about it, and you must make your children aware of it. Tell them: "if you two fight, that is none of my business. But you may not be so loud in your fights that you distract me from driving safely."

Do not let it go one day and jump down the children's throats the next. If you are having a particularly bad day and cannot tolerate even a small amount of typical car fighting, let your children know in advance: "I have a huge headache today and I will not be able to stand any fighting at all. I need you to cooperate and control yourselves in the car. This is your fair warning." If you say it like you mean it, they will get the message and comply.

2. When the fighting hits your limit, you must react.

Pull your car over to the side of the road. Stop the engine, turn around, and say, "I cannot drive safely with the noise and distraction from your fighting. Do you think you can stop?" Wait for a response. If you get an obligatory but insincere yes, and you see that the fighting seems on the verge of continuing, you may add, "I will wait until you are going to stop."

Then pull out your book, rummage through your purse, but do not move, look back, or pay attention to the fighters. When the fight appears to have genuinely stopped, get going again. If it continues, pull over to the side of the road again. Stop the car, get out, close your door. Go to the rear passenger door, open it and say, "I will not drive anywhere while this loud fighting is going on. I am going to wait until you are done."

Then stand by the side of the road, not looking at your children at all. Turn your back on the car. Breathe. Go through your wallet . . . anything. When it seems that things have calmed down, get back in the car and continue. Regardless of how late this action will make you, follow through. It gives your children a very clear message about what is and isn't acceptable in your car.

3. Work hard not to appear angry

If you let your exasperation show, you will take car fighting to a different level. Children may not fight in the car because it is the rule, it isn't safe, and it is within their control. Do not pollute the message by making it be about pleasing you.