



MOMMY SURVIVAL RULE #3,721

GOLDIE GROSSBAUM

"Fight? Why would my kids fight? No, they don't fight."

Oh.

I kind of half smiled, sure it was a joke.

It wasn't.

I was catching up with an old friend, a rare occasion considering where I live.

And like all good moms who catch up, we inevitably were talking about our kids.

And my comment about kids fighting obviously didn't resonate with my dear friend.

It was a light comment, a mix of mommy frustration and some humor. Nothing major, the type of thing moms groan about good-naturedly and move on. The type where all you are looking for is a friendly, "Oh yeah, I know what you mean!"

But apparently, her kids didn't fight.

And my kids did. And do.

They fight. They argue. They take

things away from each other. They yell at each other. They tell on each other. They even call each other names.

And just when things are heated and I finally intervene and send them to two far opposite corners of the house indefinitely, they put up a fuss that they want to play together!

Huh? Did I miss something? You guys were fighting! Remember? He wasn't nice to you! What's going on?

But they really *do* play very nicely together. They share their stuff with each other. They make wish lists together. They make shows together. They make plays together. They compliment each other. They cover for each other. They read each other books.

And I know they love each other. Only they express it differently in different ways, at different times. Not always the way I would express it.

And on the rare occasion one of

them isn't home, the others kind of hang around, waiting for their missing sibling to return. They don't want to start anything without each other.

But they do fight. And my friend's kids don't. Or so she said.

And then it struck me.

We're all moms; we have a lot in common, but we sure have a lot of differences. Our kids are *not* all the same. Our schedules are *not* the same. Our stresses are *not* the same. And every kid comes with their unique personality. Before we even begin raising them with all our starry-eyed expectations, they are already their own individual with their own strengths and weaknesses.

That day, I learned an important lesson.

First, I established Mommy Survival Rule #3,721: *Stop and think before starting a conversation with a fellow mom.*

Think: Is this a good topic? Do I want validation? Can I handle a different

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opinion? And if there's a chance I won't get what I need from the conversation, then maybe I should switch topics before starting!

Second, don't assume we all have the same approach! Don't assume our kids are all the same!

And then I made a commitment.

A commitment to all my fellow moms out there: *Before answering a question about kids, I will give a quick thought as to why the mom is asking it.*

If she wants validation, I will find a way to give it! If she wants a different opinion, I'll give it!

But I will not answer on a whim. It's not always necessary to answer with what my kids do.

Like a recent conversation I had.

"My son is three, and he refuses to be toilet trained!"

Instinctive reaction: *"Really? My kids were all toilet trained by age two!" (Pat on the back, supermom! But I'm not quite sure you made that support-needing mother feel better.)*

After a moment's thought: *"It's totally normal. I've heard of lots of kids who aren't toilet trained till after three!"*

Truthfully, this works for all interactions in life. It requires listening. Listening so that not only do you hear what someone says, but you actually hear what the person is saying—the message behind the message. And then you can be assured that people will enjoy talking to you. Even if your kids don't fight. 🌟



GOLDIE and her husband, Rabbi Yossi Grossbaum, direct Chabad of Folsom & El Dorado Hills in Northern California, with the able help of their 11 children ka"h. Goldie is a Certified Life Coach as well as a mikvah.org Certified Kallah Teacher. In her spare time, Goldie blogs (littleyellownotepad.com) about being the mom of nine boys and two girls, ranging from baby to teens, and finding the humor in the ups and downs of raising kids and life in general.



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