

Parents see sibling fighting as normal

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(Medical Xpress)—Three out of four Australian parents are concerned about their children fighting yet claim their kids get along well, a University of Queensland study has found.

Research by UQ's Parenting and Family Support Centre also found that parents view smacking as the least acceptable method to deal with [children](#) fighting.

UQ researcher John Pickering said that while parents were worried about fighting and aggression among siblings, they also viewed it as normal.

"At the same time, they're concerned enough to say that they want help controlling it," Mr Pickering said.

He said parents' concerns were matched by international research showing that early sibling aggression, when not dealt with, can lead to ongoing learning, social and [mental health problems](#).

"Although some siblings seem to get along better than others, parents find conflict between their

children a great source of distress and are often unsure whether to get involved or remain on the sidelines," Mr Pickering said.

"The problem is that if sibling conflict continues into adulthood, it can be the source of lifelong problems.

"The research shows that the outcomes for children subjected to sibling aggression are as adverse as outcomes for children who have to deal with aggression from their peers.

"It's an area that definitely needs more work."

The findings are part of a wider, ongoing study that is a world-first trial of the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program in managing sibling conflict.

Parents seeking help to manage their children's fighting, [aggression](#), anger or hostility towards each other can participate in the program free of charge, starting this month (May).

Mr Pickering said the trial, for parents of siblings who have children aged between three and 10 years with no more than four years age difference between children, offered parents a rare opportunity.

"Despite the fact that several studies have shown that [parents](#) can play an active role in their children's relationships, very few evidence-based programs here or overseas focus on siblings or sibling conflict," Mr Pickering said.

"This trial will be an opportunity to merge what we know about the importance of parental involvement in [sibling](#) relations with more than 35 years of research into Triple P."

More information: To register for the trial visit: exp.psy.uq.edu.au/siblings/

Provided by University of Queensland

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