

"I'm worried that I love my son more than I love my husband."



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Development
"I Don't Get It!"

By Robin Kavanagh, Parenting

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Five-year-old Emma Zeilhofer of West Milford, NJ, grew nervous when she saw her mom, Sue, arguing with her partner, Millie, over the color of an umbrella. Millie insisted it was pink; Sue scoffed, rolled her eyes, and called it purple. Upset by this exchange, Emma ran between the couple and shouted, "Mommy, be nice to Millie! Now say you're sorry."

Though Sue and Millie were only engaging in a little playful banter, Emma saw their trivial debate as a full-on fight. How do you explain the subtleties of friendly sarcasm to a kid?

"It's important that you don't deny your child's sense of reality by insisting that 'we weren't fighting,'" says Virginia Shiller, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist with the Yale Child Study Center, in New Haven, CT. A good reaction might be: "Sometimes I sound angry when I'm not. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. I'm really just teasing." That's a concept she can understand.

Role-playing with your child can also help her distinguish between a fun discussion and a serious argument. Try two games: First, start a quarrel about something unimportant to your child, something she'll find silly. She'll giggle, for example, when you insist that the sky is green, not blue. Then pretend you're fighting over a topic that hits closer to home -- say, taking turns with a toy. "You've been playing with it all day!" you could complain, vehemently, then explain, "See, in this case, I'm really mad."

Now is also a good time to point out that teasing can go too far and that she should speak up if someone's ribbing is rubbing her the wrong way. That way, you'll help her learn that it's better to use good humor than bullying banter with her friends.



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She wakes me every hour (at least) at night. I need some sleep!

Posted by harrisjjaa

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