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Share the Wellness Tip

The Parent Trap: Avoiding “Mom Always Liked You Best”

You have a favorite TV show and a favorite food, but do you also have a favorite child?

Although you love all your kids equally, parents may show favoritism to one child without realizing it. Earlier studies have found that many, if not most, parents do have a favorite child. And although parents usually strive to hide that, it's not always successful. That differential treatment has been linked to problems with family relationships and risky behavior in teens.

To avoid favoritism in your family, consider following these tips:

- Make a special effort to spend some time alone with each of your children. Set aside an hour to bake cookies or play pickup basketball, depending on the child's interests.
- Every human is unique, so never compare a child with his or her siblings. Quick words can sting for a lifetime. See them as individuals and love them for who they are.
- If you have a child with health or behavioral issues that require a great deal of your attention, encourage your other children to contribute to the care of their sister or brother in some small way. For instance, have your child read to the sibling who is ill.
- If possible, schedule one-on-one bonding with each of your healthy children — even if it just means having a conversation while both of you wash the dishes — so they don't feel neglected.

Sources: *NPR.org, Sept. 17, 2014; Psychology Today, October 2011*

