

# Pointers For Parents

## Counting On Your Kids Can Be Magical

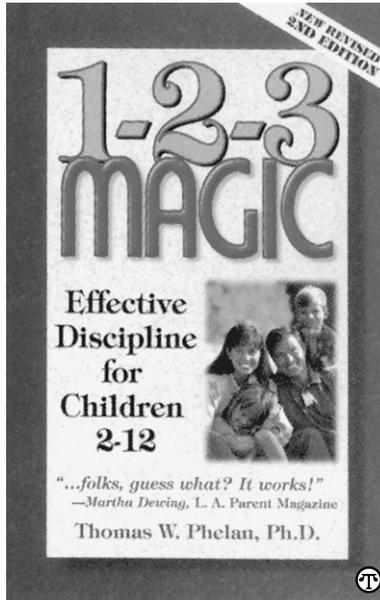
(NAPSA)—Picture this: you are driving along in the car, coming home from shopping on a Saturday afternoon. Your eight-year-old and six-year-old are together in the back seat. As you're cruising along thinking of what sounds good for dinner, you hear a voice from the back say "Mom, he's looking at me again!"

Another unnecessary fight looms. Why do kids do this? Why can't they just leave each other alone?

The incessant bickering known as sibling rivalry may be a pastime for kids, but it is often pure torture for parents. Each little squabble by itself may not be so bad, but add them all up and by the end of the day you may feel like hitchhiking to another state to find a permanent—and more peaceful—new home.

Rather than packing their own bags, though (or the kids'), many parents have turned to Dr. Thomas Phelan's *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12*. These Moms and Dads have learned—from an experienced parent and child discipline expert—to manage the frequent outbursts of sibling rivalry by making a revolutionary switch from too much talking to what Dr. Phelan calls "counting."

The animosity involved in the natural love-hate relationship between siblings is too often underestimated by parents. Parents' unconditional love for each of their children can never be used as the standard or expectation for



the love between siblings. Antagonism and competitiveness among brothers and sisters are both innate and intense. They are just part of kids being kids.

There is hope, however, for managing bickering, teasing, pestering, arguing and even physical fighting. In Dr. Phelan's *1-2-3 Magic* books, videos and audios, he provides three basic rules:

1. Count both children. Counting means giving the kids a simple warning, such as "That's 1." The count tells them that they are both out of line. If the fight continues and the kids reach a count of "3," there will be a consequence for both of them. Unless one is the obvious and unprovoked aggressor, remember

to count them both. But be careful—kids are tricky!

2. Never ask the world's stupidest question: "What happened?" or "Who started it?" Do you really expect a child to respond by saying "I have to be honest with you, Dad, this is the fourteenth fight in a row that was my fault"?

3. Don't expect an older child to be more mature during a fight than a younger child, regardless of the age difference. During battle, the "enemy has an ageless face." Imagine you say to your eleven-year-old son, "Can't you put up with a little teasing; she's only a baby"—in relation to his four-year-old younger sister. You have just "loaded the gun" of the four-year-old who will, no doubt, use her new power to maximum advantage.

Sibling rivalry will never go away. When are your children likely to get along the best? When they're no longer living under the same roof. Until that blissful day, parental consistency and persistence—along with *1-2-3 Magic*—can help make your home—and car—a lot more peaceful.

Nationally recognized as an expert on child discipline and Attention Deficit Disorder, Dr. Thomas W. Phelan has practiced for over 25 years and he appears frequently on radio and TV. Over 600,000 *1-2-3 Magic* books, videos and audiobooks have been sold (Spanish versions are also available). You can find them at local bookstores, order by calling (800) 442-4453, or visit [www.thomasphelan.com](http://www.thomasphelan.com).