

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy

Tuesday, 01 May 2018 13:03 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 May 2018 14:21



Parental Preferences

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I feel so guilty. Of our three children, I can't help but favor one and don't really like one. The other one doesn't push me in either direction.

Is this normal? Am I a bad mother?

Help,

Barbara

WOW! Barbara,

Your honesty is searing. I have seen this situation, but never heard a parent actually admit it. I would think that being honest with yourself is the first step. It is with every other problem on earth, so I think this is a good start for this very difficult dilemma.

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Please do not feel guilty, but do get to work on leveling things out. It is only fair to your children and fair to you.

You don't outline what it is that pleases you about your "favorite" or what you do not like about your "least favorite." The first thing you should do—and this might require some professional help—is take a good hard look at yourself.

Write down what is really important to you and what brings you the most pleasure in life. Do the same, outlining what you THINK your children would answer. I would bet the one who has the most in common with you is the child you prefer, and vice versa.

It is only natural to be drawn to those who obviously share your values and preferences. However, we all have much in common with every other being on the planet, and even more so with our children. If I were you, I would begin by paying much closer attention to the two kids who are lower on your totem pole.

Focus on discovering what they like, what they are good at, what they are drawn to, and what thrills them. You will surely find some unrealized value in them. If you discover that they really are very unlike you, and you can't relate in any way, you will have to dig deeper to find value in their lives, which may help you expand your life as well.

At this point, you and your feelings are the only thing that can be changed. It might be helpful for you to make a list of what you particularly do not like about them. Examine yourself to find out why YOU react that way. For example, say you love fashion and your child dresses like a farm hand, you should dig deep and ask yourself why you care. Do you consider that a reflection on you? If so, your values need some adjusting.

If you are a right-brained person, and your child is much more left brain, study up and find out what he or she has to offer that you don't. In other words, challenge yourself to grow by opening your heart and your horizons. Let the child teach you. Ask for their involvement.

Spend concentrated time with each of your children. Devote yourself to listening to them. Ask

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the kind of questions you would ask a new acquaintance. You will most probably be surprised by what you learn. Do the same with your “favorite child.” That might reveal some things that tip the scale to a more balanced state.

If all else fails, ask for help from a loved friend or relative to get more involved with all three of your children. Other people can often give a perspective that you miss.

Bottom line: whatever you do, do not let your children know you feel this way. If you have in the past, stop now. You certainly don't want to teach your favored child to have a closed heart and limited boundaries in accepting differences. On the other hand, you don't want your less favored children to think they are not worthy if they “aren't like other people,” especially you, the most important person in their world.

Remember that all the words in the universe are meaningless if you don't follow up with action. Humans, even your children, respond to how they are treated much more than they respond to what you say.

I've always found the best families are the ones where all the kids think they are the favorite. Somehow that neutralizes a touchy human condition.

Good luck. This won't be easy.

Aunt Bossy