Dear Parents, Staff, Students, and Supporters of St Joseph’s College,

In his book, ‘Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart’ Gordon Livingston writes about life’s two most important questions, “Why?” and “Why Not?” He states that the reasons for what we do, for how we live, are often obscure. There’s a lot of ‘who we are’ living in our subconscious.

For example, Livingston quotes former US President Richard Nixon who, in a speech before Congress in 1975 said, “It is time to get rid of our discredited president . . . I mean present welfare system.”

He goes on to write that:

“Once we acknowledge that there exists below our consciousness, a swamp of repressed desires, resentments and motivations that affect our day-to-day behaviour, we have made an important step towards self-understanding.”

Of the two questions posed above, “Why Not?” is obviously the one that lives in the positive realm of what’s possible.

Sometimes asking, “Why Not?” involves taking risks. Some people are foreign to taking a chance. They are obsessed with safety and security (I feel that way myself quite often!). Livingston states that:

“Life is a gamble in which we don’t get to deal the cards, but are nevertheless obligated to play them to the best of our ability.”

In recent weeks, Australia lost two of her favourite sons. Both tragically. Steve Irwin and Peter Brock came from very different facets of Australian life.

Steve Irwin was passionate about wildlife and conservation. But he also was an extremely devoted husband and father. He lived life to the full and over and over again we’ve heard that ‘what you saw on camera, was what you saw off camera’. He died doing what he loved.

Peter Brock pursued excellence in his chosen sport of motor racing. He epitomised commitment and passion in his chosen field. He died doing what he loved.

So the answer lies in being challenged as individuals to ask the question, “Why Not?” Livingston concludes by stating:

“No one would expect to become good at skiing without falling down. And yet many people are surprised at the hurt that routinely accompanies our efforts to find someone worthy of our love. To take the risks necessary to achieve this goal is an act of courage. To refuse to take them, to protect our hearts against all lost, is an act of despair.”

Let’s all practise asking the question, “Why Not?” in the coming weeks.

Best wishes and
God Bless,

Mr Peter McLoughlin
Principal
**Parents/Caregivers please note that**
**Term 4 commences on Tuesday 17 October**
**YEAR GROUPS 7-11 RECOMMENCE SCHOOL ON THAT DAY**

---

**PRINCIPAL’S NOTES**

**WILDLIFE WARRIORS**

Tomorrow, Tuesday 19 September, we are asking members of our St Joseph’s College community to donate a gold coin. The proceeds will go to ‘Wildlife Warriors’, the charity established by Steve and Terri Irwin aimed at providing appropriate care for wildlife.

Please consider supporting this worthy charity tomorrow.

**SAVING PAPER**

Help! We are conscious that the Newsletter is using many sheets of paper. The Newsletter and News Sheet are always available on the College website www.sjctweed.com.

If you are happy to view the Newsletter and News Sheet on the College website, it will save a huge amount of paper. I’d ask everyone to complete and detach the return section and have your child return it to their Homeroom teacher.

---

**PARENT / CAREGIVERintext**

**COLLEGE NEWSLETTER / NEWS SHEET RESPONSE FORM**

Please tick the appropriate box:

- [ ] I am happy to read the College Newsletter / News Sheet online.
- [ ] I wish a copy of the College Newsletter / News Sheet to be given to my child each Monday.

Signed: ……………………………………………………………………………

Parent/Career’s Name: ………………………………………………………………

Name/s of Child/Children (complete as applicable):

1. ………………………………………………………………………… Homeroom: ………
2. ………………………………………………………………………… Homeroom: ………
3. ………………………………………………………………………… Homeroom: ………

---

**EXPO**

Sincere thanks to all members of our Community who were involved in our EXPO last Tuesday evening. I am very grateful to everyone involved in the organisation, particularly Ms Kerrie Priddis who coordinated the event.

Mr Peter McLoughlin
Principal

---

**Attention ALL families:**

**Have you paid fees on the internet?**

We are now searching for families who have paid their school fees via the internet WITH INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO DETERMINE WHO THEY ARE.

If you have made a payment, but have not noticed any reduction on your Parish account, please check the payments listed below. If any relate to you, please contact Mr John Klein on (07) 5536.8701 or (07) 5536.7522 as soon as possible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>DETAILS ON STATEMENT</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28/02/2006</td>
<td>CSH</td>
<td>4410</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/02/2006</td>
<td>CSH</td>
<td>4410</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/03/2006</td>
<td>AGN</td>
<td>9999</td>
<td>$  70.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**DEPUTY’S NOTICES**

**COMING EVENTS**

**WEEK 10**

Wednesday 20 September – Friday 29 September

- Year 11 End of Course exams
- Year 20 September

- Year 12 “Schoolies” Talk
- Year 10 St Martha’s visit

Thursday 21 September

- Year 7 and Year 10 Forensic Science Incursion
- Year 9 PAS Excursion

Friday 22 September

- Years 7 and 8 Regional Debating (Grafton)
- District Surfing

**WEEK 11**

Monday 25 September – Friday 29 September

- Year 11 End of Course exams continue
- Work Education work experience
- Berg Shield Cricket

Wednesday 27 September

- Year 10 St Martha’s visit

Thursday 28 September

- Year 12 Graduation Mass

Friday 29 September

- Year 12 Farewell Assembly
- College Writing Competition
- Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 Term 3 Reports posted
- Final day of Term 3

Mr Peter Serone
Acting Deputy Principal

---

**YEAR 7 2007**

**INFORMATION EVENING**

(FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS)

Monday 20 November 2006

**ORIENTATION DAY**

(FOR STUDENTS ONLY)

Tuesday 21 November 2006

---

The School Newsletter and School Calendar are both available online @ www.sjctweed.com.

The School Calendar contains year group events, assessment schedules and term dates.
ST JOSEPH’S CATHOLIC PARISH
Tweed Heads
Catholic Presbytery
P.O. Box 25
Tweed Heads
NSW 2485
PHONE: (07) 5536.7522
FAX (07) 5536.4992

HELP WANTED
St. Joseph’s Community Centre is opening a Meal Centre at 27 Minjungbal Drive, South Tweed Heads. This service will provide meals and food parcels for disadvantaged persons in the Tweed area. We are looking for interested parishioners to volunteer their time to enable this service to commence. Volunteers are required for the preparation and serving of food, and will form part of a roster system.

YOUTH/YOUNG PEOPLE’S MASS
You are most welcome to attend this special Parish Mass, which will be celebrated in the Holy Family Chapel at St Joseph’s College Doyle Centre on Sunday 24 September beginning at 5:30pm.

Do you know the meaning of this word?

Courage: (n.) the power or quality of dealing with or facing danger, fear, pain, etc.; the confidence to act in accordance with one’s beliefs.

Strength: (n.) the state or quality of being physically or mentally strong; the ability to withstand or exert great force, stress or pressure.

Fear: (n.) a feeling of distress, apprehension, or alarm caused by impending danger, pain, etc.; concern, anxiety; to be afraid to do something.

Doubt: (n.) uncertainty about the truth, fact or existence of something; lack of belief in or conviction about something.

MUSIC NEWS

GOLD COAST EISTEDDFOD
Rosarna Geerz (10E) recently took part in the Gold Coast Eisteddfod and would like to advise of the following achievements:

- Sacred Solo 15 Years and Under ~ “My God” ~ Rosarna was awarded Very Highly Commended and achieved 4th Place.
- Folk Song 15 Years and Under ~ “Ye Banks and Braes” ~ Rosarna was awarded Very Highly Commended and achieved 4th Place.
- Rosarna also undertook the AMEB Piano Exam and achieved a 4th Grade Credit.

Congratulations Rosarna on your achievements.

Before School Supervision: Student supervision is available prior to the commencement of the school day, from 8:20am until 8:40am.
PASTORAL NEWS

Accompanying today’s newsletter is a revised version of “Family Matters” a NSW Health information brochure for parents on how to approach drug issues with their family.

This new brochure is designed to assist parents in answering questions they may face when talking about drugs with their children. The booklet includes information about the risks of drug and alcohol abuse, information about specific drugs (cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines), tips for talking with your family about drugs and contact details for services that give further information and help.

I encourage all parents and carers to take the time to read through this brochure and engage your children in discussions around the issues raised.

Ms Frances Stegeman
Pastoral Advisor

St Vinnies Update

Thanks to everyone who supported or gave of their time at the St Vinnies cake stall on the day of our Athletics Carnival. Special thanks to those Year 11 students who donated cakes for the day.

We raised a total of $370, all of which goes to Vinnies in helping them help the unfortunate.

With some of the money from the cake stall, the St Joseph’s College Vinnies Conference is participating in the ‘Assist-a-student’ program. For $70 a year we are able to cover all the education costs of a child in a developing country who would otherwise have no opportunity for an education.

We are awaiting the child’s details, but they should be known soon, at which time it will be posted in the College Newsletter.

Karly Goodman (11A)

CAREERS NEWS

‘On-time’ applications close on 29 September 2006.

TAFE-delivered VET applications (for continuing and new students) close on Wednesday 21 September.

Hungry Jacks, South Tweed Heads, are currently seeking junior employees.

See Mr Hall in the Careers Room for more information.

Mr Matt Hall
Careers Coordinator

UNIFORM SHOP HOURS

Monday to Friday
(8:30am – 12:00noon AND 1:00 – 3:30pm)

ENGLISH NEWS

The Annual SJC Public Speaking Competition was held during EXPO last week.

In the Junior Section the participants were Gregory Pieris, Caitlin McGibbon-Goode, Jessica Godfrey, Tess Lyon and Torrey Atkin. Due to the high quality of all presentations, Tess Lyon won what was a very difficult section to judge.

Tara Francis, Daniel Marriott, Karly Goodman, Kate McGrath, Luke Barnes, Lucy Fitzhugh and Cherish Bentley took part in the highly entertaining Senior Section.

Karly Goodman was the winner of both the Senior Section and the Overall Competition.

Congratulations to all participants, and special thanks to Mrs Lyon who judged the Senior Section, to past student Melissa Corbutt who judged both sections, to Miss Vella for her organisation and to Mr Connolly who presided on the night.

Mrs Janet Crouch
English Coordinator

Night of Notables

Wednesday 1 November 2006
(Term 4, Week 3)
6:00-8:00pm

The Doyle Centre
St Joseph’s College

Year 9 will be presenting their “Night of Notables” from 6:00pm culminating with a Parade of Students at 7:30pm.

Parents and carers of Year 9 students are invited to attend the Doyle Centre and see their child take part in the 2006 Program.
Beachathon 2006

Friday 3 November
(Term 4, Week 3)

Mark this date in your Diary as this is the date set down for this year’s Beachathon.

The 2006 Beachathon was launched in the traditional fashion last week.

Our target this year is to raise $25,000. This year’s target roughly equates to each student raising $40.00. Again we ask that you dig deep and give generously as you have in the past.

Students will receive a permission letter in the first week of Term 4 for parents/caregivers to complete.

We hope we can also ask for volunteers to assist on the day of the Beachathon. We thank in anticipation, all parents and caregivers for getting behind their children to obtain the much needed sponsorship.

Similar to last year, students will receive incentive chocolates for each ten dollars raised and brought in to the school. We must see the money before the students get the chocolate.

Money raised will be collected three times a week by Year 11 students. The ongoing tally of money raised will be displayed daily.

On Friday 3 November, the day of the Beachathon, students will be walking from Kingscliff to Fingal and back to Kingscliff (Faux Park) where they will receive a sausage sandwich, drink and iceblock. Water will be provided along the way at critical drink and checkpoints.

As always, with our outdoor activities our sun safe policy is critical in ensuring the safety of your children. Sunscreen, hat, personal water bottles and sun-safe clothing will be essential on the day. (A sun safe shirt is one with sleeves and some form of collar). Strappy shirts revealing midriffs are a problem for the walk, particularly if the sun is extremely hot.

Students will be given the opportunity to swim and participate in beach activities after the walk and BBQ.

We have been very successful in the past and look forward to your support in assisting us to raise the funds to provide improved facilities for your children.

The Beachathon Committee

RRISK NEWS

REDUCE RISK – INCREASE STUDENT KNOWLEDGE

In today’s Newsletter we have the fourth part of the RRISK information kit provided to schools. We still have a couple of months until the Year 11 RRISK Seminar in November.

In the meantime I hope you find the next chapter of RRISK to be useful:

Talking to your Sons and Daughters about Alcohol and Drugs

It is best for education about alcohol and drugs to begin before young people are exposed to personal decisions about their use. Young people who have accurate information, coping and decision making skills and understand the issues, will be in a good position to make safe decisions about alcohol and drugs.

Parents can begin this education in the home and support school and other programs such as the RRISK Seminars. Parents also provide a powerful role model when it comes to drinking and attitudes to alcohol and other drugs.

Take time to talk. For example, sitting down with your sons or daughters and mapping out a plan of action and what to say if they are offered drugs or alcohol can help equip them for the almost inevitable real event. Listen to what your son or daughter says about alcohol and drugs and follow up with a discussion. Take the opportunities when they come up during everyday activities, for example:

- When you pour a glass of alcohol
- When alcohol or other drugs are mentioned on TV or other media
- When using or giving out medicines
- When your son or daughter has an assignment on alcohol, smoking, medicines or other drugs.

It is important to understand that in some situations your child may take risks. Sitting down afterwards and helping them identify where things started to go wrong enables them to consider what they could do differently the next time they are faced with a similar situation.

Mr Peter Serone
PD/H/PE Coordinator

Y O U T H S A F E

‘Helping Teenagers Become Safer Drivers’

Parent Tip No. 2

Enjoy your time supervising your Learner driver. This can be a great opportunity to spend time getting to know each other better.
“It’s nothing to be worried about, kiddo. Nothing has changed, and I still expect to see Bardo here tomorrow so we can all go fishing. Now, I think it’s time for you two to go to bed, you’ve got an early start.”

After saying our ‘Goodnights’ and ‘God bless’, we trudged through the front door and, as I closed it, I saw Pop’s face under the verandah light and, despite what he had said, it looked more than worried.

Ms Margaret Bermingham  
English Teacher

OUR PLANS FOR THE FISHING TRIP WERE CANCELLED WHEN WE WOKE UP TO A TYPICAL STORM FOR THAT TIME OF YEAR. THE RAIN CAME DOWN AT AN ALMOST HORIZONTAL ANGLE AND THE SKY WAS NEARLY BLACK WITH CLOUDS. THUNDER CRACKED AS LIGHTNING STRUCK OUT OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN.

SO, MEG AND I SPENT THE DAY ‘HELPING’ MUM MAKE HER MOTHER’S CHERRY CHEESECAKE. WE WERE ASSIGNED OUR OWN RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PROCESS – MINE WAS SWITCHING THE BLENDER ON AND OFF. WHEN IT WAS FINISHED, WE SPRINKLED OUR NAMES ON THE TOP WITH MILO.

THE STORM HELD OUT FOR THE ENTIRE DAY, SUPPLYING A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS DRUM ROLL OF THUNDER.

I SAT AT THE WINDOW, WATCHING BATTY OLD MR KINGSTON ACROSS THE ROAD TRYING TO PROTECT HIS PRECIOUS GERANIUMS FROM THE ONSLAUGHT. IT WAS FORTUNATE IF THEY SUPPLIED THEIR FANATICAL CULTIVATOR WITH ENough FLOWERS FOR ONE VASE A YEAR. YET, HE PERSISTED IN COVERING THEM WITH A BRIGHT BLUE TARPAULIN.

THE DAY PASSED WITH NO EVENT AND WE WENT TO BED IN HOPE OF WAKING UP TO A CLEARER DAY. OUR WISHES WERE GRANTED AND, LITERALLY IN TIME WITH THE SPARROWS, BARDO WAS AT OUR DOOR, READY TO LEARN THE ART OF FISHING.

WE ALREADY HAD ALL OF OUR GEAR PACKED, INCLUDING A SPARE ROD AND REEL FOR BARDO, AND AN EXTENSIVE PICNIC WHICH HAD BEEN DONATED BY BOTH MY MOTHER AND OLD MRS JENSEN.

AT NINE O’CLOCK, WE WALKED TO THE JETTY, WHICH WAS ABOUT FIVE KILOMETRES AWAY, AND WHICH WAS WHERE POP’S PRIDE AND JOY, HIS TINNY, WAS KEPT.

IT WAS A CLEAR DAY, AND WE ALL CATCHED AT LEAST THREE FISH EACH, MEG WITH THE HELP OF POP. WE ANCHORED DOWN IN A LITTLE COVE WHERE WE HAD OUR PICNIC AND SKINNED THE FISH, READY TO EAT THAT NIGHT. POP TOLD US STORIES OF HIS CHILDHOOD AND FISHING ADVENTURES. RELUCTANTLY, WE RETURNED HOME AS THE SUN WAS SETTING, TURNING THE HORIZON INTO FIRE. REDS AND GOLD STREAKED THE SKY AS WE WALKED DOWN OUR STREET, BACK TO OUR HOUSE.

BARDO WAS TO STAY FOR THE NIGHT, SO WHEN WE GOT HOME, WE SET UP MATTRESSES ON THE BACK VERANDAH. THE SMELL OF MOSQUITO COILS AND EUCALYPT BUSHES MINGLED WITH THE SWEET, CLEAR EVENING AIR. WE ATE OUR WELL-DESERVED FISH AND SALAD, AND AFTERWARDS WE SAT ON THE VERANDAH, TALKING AND LISTENING TO DAD’S WIRELESS.

FINALLY, MUM AND POP MADE US PUT OUR PYJAMAS ON, SO THAT WE COULD GO STRAIGHT TO BED AFTER POP READ US A STORY FROM HIS LITTLE BLACK BOOK. HE HAD ALWAYS CARRIED THIS BOOK AROUND WITH HIM. IT USUALLY SAT ON THE TABLE BESIDE HIS BED, BUT WHEN HE WAS READING US A SPECIAL STORY, LIKE TONIGHT, HE GOT IT OUT AND GENTLY PECURED IT’S DELICATE, YELLOWED PAGES FOR THE PERFECT TALE.

I HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE BATHROOM, WHERE I HAD BEEN PUTTING MY PYJAMAS ON AND BRUSHING MY TEETH, AND WAS WALKING THROUGH THE BACK DOOR TO THE VERANDAH, WHERE BARDO WAS GETTING CHANGED. IN THE DIM LIGHT OF THE PORCH LIGHT, I SAW HIS USUALLY SMOOTH, DARK SKIN, NOW TORN WITH SCRATCHES AND SHADOWED WITH BRUISES. I GASPED, AND HE SPUN AROUND, HIS DARK EYES WIDE OPEN.

I POINTED TO THE BRUISES ALL OVER HIS BODY. “WHa-”

HE SILENCED ME AND HURRIEDLY SAID “PLEASE, KIP, DON’ TELL THEM. THEY BIN’ FOLLOWIN’ ME.”

TO BE CONTINUED

LOOK OUT FOR CHAPTER FIVE OF ‘KIP’ IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER, FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER  
(AFTER THAT YOU’LL HAVE TO WAIT TILL NEXT TERM’S FIRST NEWSLETTER ON MONDAY 23 OCTOBER)
Extended Periods of Leave: If you are planning a holiday during the term dates, a letter requesting leave should be forwarded to the Principal in advance.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Could this be a picture of you?

The nominated student is required to present themselves to the College Principal before Friday of this week. If this student does, they will receive a voucher to the value of $5 for purchases at the Canteen.

KEEP WATCHING THIS SPACE – THE NEXT TIME IT COULD BE YOU!

Student Council

CANTEEN NEWS AND ROSTER

WEEKLY SPECIAL
This week’s special meal deal is the very yummy Chilli Chicken and Coconut Wrap WITH salad AND a small bottle of water for the affordable price of $5.00. So come on in and order (early) your ‘meal deal’.

TBA - SOS
This week we are running a little short of helpers on both Wednesday and Thursday. If you find you can help out on either day, we would be delighted to see you. Call me!!

CANTEEN ROSTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 10</th>
<th>WEEK 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 18 September</td>
<td>Monday 25 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia Haaijer &amp; Lea Kirkham</td>
<td>Michelle Clarke &amp; Jan O’Donohue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 19 September</td>
<td>Tuesday 26 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Schmith &amp; Lyn Watkins</td>
<td>Jenny Cork &amp; TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 20 September</td>
<td>Wednesday 27 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA &amp; TBA</td>
<td>Wendy Morrison &amp; Helen Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 21 September</td>
<td>Thursday 28 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA &amp; TBA</td>
<td>Janette Lanskey &amp; Fem Wendt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 22 September</td>
<td>Friday 29 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Bush &amp; Margaret Puitland</td>
<td>Leanne Adshead &amp; Sonia Haaijer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mrs Dianne Pinkstone
Canteen Manager

A U S T R A L I A N   N A V Y   C A D E T S
‘Serious Fun, Safely Done’

The Australian Navy Cadets (ANC) is a voluntary youth organisation open to males and females between the ages of 12½ to 19 years of age.

The RAN is fully committed to youth development in Australia and supports adventurous young Australians through the Australian Navy Cadets. Youth development programs aim to help young people deal successfully with the challenges of adolescence and prepare them for the independence and responsibilities of being adults, parents, workers and citizens, by developing key personal competencies.

Cadets Parade TS Vampire,
Saturdays, 9:00am to 3:30pm
Dry Dock Road, South Tweed Heads

Contact Lieutenant Gary Fisher on (07) 5598.8546
or Mobile (0412) 771.088
or check us out on www.cadetnet.gov.au/anc

BRING HOME A BROTHER OR A SISTER

In February 2007, students, aged 15 – 18 years, from over 15 countries will be arriving in Australia to study at local schools for 5 or 11 months. Opportunities exist to act as a host family in a volunteer/uncharged capacity. Hosting can be on a temporary, short or long term basis.

Host families help provide students with the chance to study and experience life in Australia. This is a great way to learn about another country and culture, establish a lifelong link to a family in another country and contribute to international goodwill. If your family can offer a friendly, supportive and caring home environment, contact us today.

To learn more about this opportunity call Student Exchange Australia on 1300 135 331 or visit our website www.studentexchange.org.au

Queensland Institute of Graphic Art
Holiday Program

Monday 2 October to Friday 6 October
9:00am to 2:00pm

Areas covered during the workshop involve Graphic Design, Typography, Drawing and Illustration, Pre-Press and Print Media.

The workshop costs $160.00 and includes all art material.

Interested students see Mrs Taylor.

Gardiner Chess

October Holidays Gold Coast Chess Camp
Mon to Wed, 2 - 4 Oct & Friday 6 Oct
9:00am to 5:00pm daily

Enjoy coaching, tournaments, fun chess & other activities!
See Entry Form in last newsletter or go to www.gardinerchess.com

Queensland Institute of Graphic Art
Holiday Program

Monday 2 October to Friday 6 October
9:00am to 2:00pm

Areas covered during the workshop involve Graphic Design, Typography, Drawing and Illustration, Pre-Press and Print Media.

The workshop costs $160.00 and includes all art material.

Interested students see Mrs Taylor.

Gardiner Chess

October Holidays Gold Coast Chess Camp
Mon to Wed, 2 - 4 Oct & Friday 6 Oct
9:00am to 5:00pm daily

Enjoy coaching, tournaments, fun chess & other activities!
See Entry Form in last newsletter or go to www.gardinerchess.com
Kids Fighting - By Michael Grose

What do you do if your kids fight and argue with each other? Do you make a plea for peace, order the combatants to their bedrooms or lay the blame on the child who caused the infraction?

It is almost impossible to stay out of kids’ fighting because they are usually noisy and invariably one child will call on mum or dad to intervene.

So common is kids fighting that it appears to have become the first commandment of childhood - Thou shalt fight and argue with your brothers and sisters until your parents can stand it no longer.

My research indicates that sibling fighting is a concern to parents in three out of every four families with more than one child. Certainly this is the issue that most parents want to discuss when they come to my parenting seminars.

It is important to have a realistic attitude to children's disputes. When adults live together under one roof there are bound to be disagreements. Why should children be any different? Conflict itself is not harmful, but the way disagreements are resolved is the issue that generally concerns parents.

Look at the nature of most disputes. They generally begin as a disagreement over some minor issue such as the choice of television programs, the result of a game or a refusal to share. I have seen my children fight over the earth-shattering issues of who should sit in the front seat of the car. The issues children fight over may be minor but the resulting disturbance of the peace can be extremely hard for parents to deal with. They often occur when we are busy and have little time to handle them effectively.

Kid’s fights usually have a number of predictable phases. The first is the quiet stage when one child annoys, niggles or even criticises another. The dispute enters phase two as the noise level rises and children become agitated or belligerent. The fight is now almost in full swing so parents need to brace themselves for stage three which is the moving phase when the fight shifts from one area of the house to another accompanied by the use of insults, shouting and door slamming. It may even become physical.

The fight usually climaxes when one or all parties involved come to you in tears, telling tales or looking for justice with that old line, “Mum, she hit me and I didn’t do anything.” It is probably time to reach for the walkman, turn the volume up on the television or make yourself scarce. Anything for some peace and quiet!

There are two broad approaches that parents can adopt with kids fighting - become involved or remain neutral. Your approach will depend on the age, maturity and ability of your children to sort out their own problems, your ability to ignore noise and your beliefs about how conflict should be resolved.

Australian psychologist and parenting authority Dr. Maurice Balson in his book Becoming Better Parents recommends that parents leave children to resolve their own disputes. He says, “If parents ignored sibling fighting and left children free to settle their own disputes, the incidence of fighting would decrease.”

Balson maintains that kids fighting is for the benefit of their parents and when we intervene to adjudicate or punish the guilty child we are doing exactly what the children want us to do.

This approach makes a great deal of sense, but as most parents know, some fights are impossible to ignore particularly when they happen under your nose.

If this is the case make a swift retreat when children fight or invite them to resolve their noisy disputes outside. Many parents have found that arguing and fighting practically disappears when children are consistently shown the door to the backyard.

Children often need parental assistance to help them resolve their disputes amicably.

When children want you to intervene in their disagreements let them know that you are willing to help them work out a solution, but avoid taking sides. Establish what the fight is about, rather than who started it, and offer suggestions to resolve the issue.

Of course you cannot sit down and work through every issue with kids, but through meetings or discussions you can at least give them some guidelines that they may use themselves. But don’t expect children to suddenly sit down and discuss every dispute with Buddha-like wisdom if they have hurled insults at each other for years. Be realistic and look for small improvements.

If you do intervene in kids fighting make sure that you get in early before a full-scale fight occurs. Be assertive, make them aware that they are arguing and inform them of its affect on you. Invite them to either stop fighting or continue the dispute elsewhere.

If you are concerned that one child is being victimised or singled out by other siblings discuss some survival strategies such as going to their bedroom at the first sign of a fight or even moving close to a parent if safety is an issue. Often the victims give as good as they receive when families fight and can sometimes be the instigators of disputes.

Don’t be too perturbed if your children argue and fight with each other at the drop of a hat. Some of the closest adult families admit to habitually fighting when they were children. And some young siblings I know are affectionate to each other one minute and ready to fight tooth and nail the next. Let’s face it, children are hard to fathom at the best of times and down-right impossible when they fight.

Fortunately, there are strategies that parents can use that dramatically reduce the amount, frequency and intensity of fights that happen in families. One simple preventative strategy is the use of regular team briefs. Once a week parents sit with their children in a quiet place and discuss family issues and concerns as well as talk about positive things that have happened in the past week. Invariably kids conflict and issues kids fight about are raised. This gives children both a voice and parents an opportunity to teach children how to resolve conflict reasonably and quietly. My research shows that families that have a conflict resolution process in place, such as team briefs or family meetings experience a significant reduction in kids fighting.

For further information on this topic and a range of other issues go to www.parentingideas.com.au