



WHY IS IT DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN TO SHARE?

You have a new cell phone, and you really like it. Your friend walks up to you and says, "I want your phone. Give it to me." "It's mine," you say. "But I want it," says your friend. Do you have to share your phone?

"Learning to share with grace is a long process. Here's how to turn moments of struggle into rich opportunities to help children learn critical skills." (Zero to Three – Parenting Resource, 8.11.2017)

What is sharing?

Adults think sharing should be two or more children cooperatively playing with a toy or materials. Children often think that "She won't share" means she won't give it to me. The child who wants it has no interest in it "sharing" with the child who has it.

Why can't children share?

Children's brains are still developing, and they don't have the ability to understand someone else's perspective. They can only focus on what they need and want. So not wanting to share is perfectly normal for young children. They are not selfish. They are little.

What can we do?

1. Don't call it sharing. Call it "turn taking." That makes it much clearer to a child.
2. Wait for children to be old enough to understand what "turn taking is."
3. Calmly tell children that you can't allow children to grab or hit.
3. Model the language children need to be eventually able to use – You really want that toy don't you? He's upset because he would like a turn with that toy. You both want to play with it; let's problem solve.
4. Respect the child who is enjoying playing with a toy. Offer them "long turn" before they are ready to play with it with someone or to give it to someone. Help them to say, "I'm not done yet."
5. Support the child who really wants something. Acknowledge their feelings while gently explaining why they are not getting what they want right now. Delayed gratification takes time to learn but is so important.

Resources –

- **Baby Steps**, a ZERO TO THREE newsletter, 8.11.19
- Gentle Parenting,