



ERIN
HARREL

of Cape Coral
is the mother
of three children.

Oh, brother!

Coming to terms with **siblings' different parenting** styles

It's summer, and for our family that means quality time with loved ones. We look forward to frolicking lakeside in Michigan at our family's summer cabin, visiting with extended family, as well as friends, and their children. We take great pride in ensuring our children, Jude, Riley and Maggie, get to know their cousins, as well as our childhood friends and their kids.

The kids have a ball playing by the lake and running around like maniacs until they finally pass out at night. That's when the problems usually start. Our kids are accustomed to an early bedtime. Five-year-old Maggie adheres to a firm 7 p.m. bedtime at home. Nine-year-old Riley follows at 7:30 p.m. and 10-year-old Jude at 8 p.m. They all enjoy reading for half an hour to an hour and then lights out. Bedtime at our house is serious business.

When we are on vacation, hopping from house to house with relatives, we often try to adjust to allow the kids to match their cousins' bedtimes. But after a few nights of being off their schedule, we always see what a huge role sleep plays in their behavior. It then becomes a balance of being kind and meeting our kids' needs. If they don't get the sleep they need, they are not fun to be around. When they misbehave no one enjoys



Erin's parents and their grandkids

Photo special to SW FL Parent & Child

our visit, and our vacation becomes a nightmare for everyone.

Each summer, we encounter a few episodes of who's who in the world of parenting. As we make our own way down the parental path, Greg and I have found each of our siblings and cousins do it a little bit differently. My older brother and his wife are adamant about adhering to strict nap times. This sometimes means adjusting everyone's schedule to meet their kids' needs. I have to say, I am most impressed by their commitment to this exercise, because I have witnessed my niece and nephew without their nap. It ain't pretty!

It's funny to hear and see how each of us has come into our own when it comes to child rearing. We each have unique but highly functional parenting styles. One of my sisters and her husband makes parenting decisions


together and then let their two boys know the plan. My other sister and her husband are patient but firm, adhering to the no-nonsense style.

On the other hand, my younger brother and his wife never raise their voice at their daughter. They are so kind and gentle when they speak to her, and in return she is the sweetest child I have ever met. I suppose it has something to do with the fact they only have one, so far. But I think they

would be as equally mild-mannered if they had five children.

For example, Kevin might ask 3-year-old Hadleigh if she is tired and genuinely use her insight in making decisions about what time to put her to bed that night. It astonishes me that this actually works. The level of respect Kevin and Colleen have for their daughter is amazing. My kids would say they were NEVER tired and would try to stay up all night.

But as the family prepares to gather this year, I've vowed to make a conscious effort to learn from what others do right and leave the rest alone. There is more than one way to raise a child. Just because we do something our way doesn't necessarily make it the right way. Unless, of course, it's bedtime — because all kids need their sleep.

Just kidding. 

Contact us: We enjoy hearing from you. Send letters or comments to: pamela@swflparentchild.com.