

## **Fair Fighting Rules**

### **1. No Physical Violence!**

If you are so angry that your body needs to release energy, take time out, run around the block, punch a bag, lift weights, but do not engage with the person you are angry with. If you are faced with a potentially violent person who is not in control of him- or herself, seek safety!

### **2. No Name-Calling**

To call your partner demeaning names is verbal abuse and inflames conflict rather than adding to its resolution. If your partner engages in name-calling, you have the right to walk away until he or she is able to discuss the issue without retorting to verbal abuse.

### **3. No Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is anger couched as humor. It is, therefore, indirect communication and does not add to the resolution of conflict. If your partner engages in sarcasm, you have the right to walk away until he or she is able to discuss the issue without being sarcastic.

### **4. No “Last Week’s Laundry”**

Stick to the issue that brought up the conflict. Even though there may be many other unresolved issues from the past that relate to the current problem, bringing up “last week’s laundry” extends conflict, often making resolution impossible. Set aside a separate date, possibly with a friend or counselor as mediator, to address past issues that keep you from feeling close to your partner.

### **5. Bring Up Conflict ASAP**

The time frame to approach your partner to resolve an issue is highly individual and depends on the level of your hurt and anger and many other factors such as childhood experiences, your own flexibility and the level of current safety. Commit to doing your best.

### **6. Be Short And Precise**

Do not exploit a conflict by hammering your partner by going on and on about the issue. State why you felt hurt and angry and what your request is for the future.

## **7. Active Listen**

Let your partner know that you understood what he or she was saying to you, even if you don't agree with his or her point of view. Resolution of conflict includes only rarely total agreement about what went wrong. More often it is a matter of acknowledging that we all come with our own filters, with which we view the world, and to agree to disagree.

## **8. Be Willing to Compromise**

Conflict does not get resolved by holding on to one's position. At the same time don't sell yourself short so that you don't regret later on what you agree to. This is a balancing act and may require practice. The ultimately best outcome is a "win/win" solution for both partners involved. It is possible! But you have to step into the resolution of conflict with this possibility in mind.

## **9. Appreciate**

End your "fight" on a positive note. Appreciate your partner for something that you think he or she did well during the conflict resolution. If you think there is nothing to compliment, search until you find something! The best motivator for change is praise. You may also acknowledge yourself for something well done – but only after appreciating your partner first.

## **10. Keep Commitments**

Agree only to what you can whole-heartedly commit to. If your partner asks you to commit to something and you are not sure whether you can deliver it in the future, be honest about it but also ask yourself whether you are willing to give it a try – this means, not just lip-service but a genuine attempt to change.

**And remember,  
well fought conflicts open the door to increased intimacy!**

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