

## Fair Fighting

**Fight by mutual consent:** Don't insist on a fight at a time when one of you can't handle this type of strain. A good fight demands two ready participants. It is best not to have a fight or intense discussion when one or both individuals are tired or have other commitments.

**Resist making threats during or immediately after the argument.**

**Avoid blanket labels:** Judging words and name calling is never allowed.

**Stick to the subject:** Limit this fight to this subject only. Don't throw every other problem into it; take them at a different time. Approach the issues with a problem-solving attitude.

**Don't interrupt; stay on the same eye level:** No one should interrupt and both should be on equal level. One person should not tower above the other.

**Avoid words like 'never' or 'always'..**

**Stick to the present:** Don't dredge up past mistakes and faults about which no one can do anything.

**Don't argue in the dark.**

**Don't leave the argument:** Don't walk away or leave the argument without the permission of the other person.

**Don't point fingers:** It makes the recipient feel like you are lecturing and it is an "over-the-other" position.

**Take responsibility for change.**

**Take responsibility for your feelings.** Rather than saying, "You make me so..." try, "I am angry" instead. Say what you feel about specific behaviors (ex. "I feel hurt when you say disrespectful things to me).

**Avoid over-dramatization of problems.** This makes decisions life and death issues; whereas the reality is that very few decisions revolve around your existence or non-existence.

**Each person has the right to take time to collect their thoughts.**

**Don't hit below the belt:** In your lives together you discover each other's sensitive areas. Don't throw them at each other.

**Don't be critical and attacking.** When the other person has no recourse to run away or retaliate, there will be no solution

**Be honest.** Yes, it hurts. Check out assumptions. Don't assume that just because someone loves you, they understand you or what you want.

**Don't quit. Work it out:** Bring the fight to a mutual conclusion. Otherwise, it will just recur again and again.

**Don't try to win, EVER:** If one wins, the other loses and begins to build resentment about this relationship. That destroys rather than builds the relationship. You can both win – or you both inevitably lose.

**Respect crying:** it is a valid response to how you may feel, but don't let crying sidetrack you. It is a response for men as well as women.

**Listen as much as you talk:** Seek information as much as you give your opinion.

**Avoid mind-reading:** Make reflective or clarifying statements in order to ascertain your understanding of the other person's position.

**Admit your part of the problem:** Ongoing conflicts are like dances, "It takes two to tango." Focus on identifying your own dance steps that keep a conflict going.

**Argue Sober:** Avoid discussing important issues when you or the other person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

**Sleep on it:** Sometimes it is okay to just go to bed because you are tired. Don't ever discuss hot topics when tired. Sometimes, after a good night's rest, the thing that seems so important is diminished in importance.

**Agree to disagree:** Know that many arguments are about opinions, not facts, or at least opinions about facts. Be tolerant of different opinions and perspectives.

**No violence, EVER:** Physical violence and threats violate all the rules for fighting by mutual consent.

**Remember a fight between partners has the purpose of clearing the air and expressing deep feelings in order to build a more unified life. Keep you goal in mind – the goal of sharing your lives with each other.**

**Words you should not say in a fight:**

- "You never"
- "You always"
- "When you will ever learn"
- "I told you so"
- "I don't want to discuss it"
- "How many times do I have to tell you?"

**Words you may say in a fight:**

- "I'm sorry"
- "Please help me"
- "Thank you"
- "I need you"
- "I did wrong"
- "I love you"
- "My bad"