



RULES FOR FAIR FIGHTING TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

#1: Discuss One Topic and Take Turns Speaking

Choose one issue at a time and stick to it. Invite each other to share their point of view so you both have an opportunity to say what you need. Give your full attention to your partner and make a conscious effort to not interrupt. Genuinely listen to your partner's concerns and feelings; your only job is to understand their point of view, even if you disagree.

#2: Use "I" Statements

Use words to describe how you feel and what you need from the other partner to feel understood and heard in the relationship. Use "I" messages to describe feelings of anger, hurt, or disappointment. Avoid "you" messages such as, "you make me angry...." Instead, try something like, "I feel angry when you...."

#3: Maintain Emotional Control ~ No Yelling

Yelling sends the message that only your words matter. Make a conscious effort to remain calm and refrain from yelling. It is more likely that your significant other will consider your viewpoint.

#4: Be Respectful

It is easy to get all too comfortable with your significant other, but at all costs, avoid name-calling, insults, put-downs, swearing, and other forms of intimidation.

#5: No Hitting Below the Belt

Attacking areas of personal sensitivity creates an atmosphere of distrust, anger, and vulnerability.

#6: Refrain from Blaming

Blaming will lead your significant other to focus on defending themselves, rather than on understanding you and the matter at hand. Instead, talk about how your partner's actions made you feel.

#7: No Talk of Divorce or Breakup

Threatening divorce or breakup during arguments will almost certainly hurt your relationship. Divorce or breakup is the ultimate abandonment, and mentioning it can make the other person insecure, and make the problems in your relationship seem much bigger than they need to be.

#8: No Use of Physical Force

Express feelings in words, not actions. It goes without saying, no physical intimidation or intentional use of force; that includes no pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, kicking, hair pulling, chocking, throwing objects, or holding your partner down.

#9: Time-Out

If an argument starts to become personal or heated, let your partner know that you need a "time out." Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after you have cooled down. Thirty minutes is often sufficient time to calm one's emotional state.

#10: 24/48 Hour Rule

If no amount of talking will lead to problem-solving, agree to revisit the issue within 24 hours. Do not leave the problem unresolved, as unresolved feelings rarely go away on their own. And, if you are serious about resolving the matter successfully, avoid bringing up issues that are more than 48 hours old as it is counterproductive.

#11: Attempt to Reach a Compromise or an Understanding

There is not always a perfect answer to an argument. Do your best to come to a compromise (this means some give and take from both sides). If you cannot come to a compromise, simply taking the time to understand your partner's perspective can help soothe negative feelings.