

How To Fight Fair: An Easy-To-Follow Guide For Couples

Ok, this post is not really fighting, it's more about conflict resolution, but let me just start with what NOT to do! Both men and women make some mistakes with conflict.

Ladies, pay attention, now...

First, know this: If there's one thing that strikes fear into the hearts of men everywhere, it's when the significant woman or some other important woman in his life says, "We have to talk."

Here is what the man is thinking when he hears "WHTT:" Three things simultaneously...

1. It's really big.
2. It's not good.
3. I have no idea what it's about.

No wonder men hate it when women say this!

Guys, it's your turn.....

Conflict doesn't have to be an either-or proposition. Men sometimes choose either to go big, loud and "win" to shut things down quickly, or they choose to try to avoid conflict at all cost. Sort of the ostrich approach. If I stick my head in the sand, nobody can see anything wrong.

Instead, both men and women can learn how to engage in productive conflict resolution if they follow the simple steps below.

Remember, the whole point of this is to achieve an outcome that serves both of you. It's not about getting what you want, necessarily.

Ground Rules

Let's lay some ground rules for resolving whatever is annoying you. If you want to really get some quality constructive time in, you have to respect your partner's time, respect his character, and give yourselves both the ability to be fully present.

Timing: Say, "I'd like to make an appointment with you to talk about X. When would be a good time for that?" Generally speaking, the person being asked to talk needs to set up a time right away although the actual talk time may take a little while if life is super busy. No stalling for time though. If a talk date hasn't been set right away and not it's been longer than three days and you're not getting a response, re-suggest having the conversation, and then hold them to it.

Reasonable and Specific: State briefly what it is you want to talk about, without going into the issue or tinting it with "flavor" (You know what I mean.) Keep the topic neutral, objective and light for the moment. You will go deeper when the appointment occurs.

Engagement Rules

During the "talk" everyone is responsible for his or her own behavior, but it helps to be aware of the context of the situation. If one person just got home from work, for example, allow some time to wind down first. You want a fully aware, and engaged partner.

If one party becomes flooded with emotion (i.e. "freaking out" in a completely unproductive way) then a time out is fair game. Here's the deal, though. You can't call a time out for the other party,

of course, because that would only make the other person furious. You can only call a time out for yourself – even if you're the one staying calm. Make sense? The person who calls the time out is responsible to re-call the conversation in an hour or so, or make another appointment. Just a note, there's no point in getting back to the talk in less than 30 minutes. The minimum amount of time it takes a flooded person to calm down physically is 20 minutes. Getting back to the talk before calming can occur isn't helpful.

Keep the conversation on task:

- No name -calling.
- Talk about the behavior, not the character.
- Keep to your complaint (frustration regarding a specific incident).
- Don't descend into criticism (personal attacks).
- Stick to one issue at a time. Avoid bringing up past, unrelated events or other topics.

Managing the conversation and focusing on a productive result is the key to successful conflict resolution.