

FIGHTING FAIR

BASIC RULES:

1. **FIGHT** - Don't be silent when you should be fighting. The silent treatment is cruel and unusual punishment. You can't fight without talking: you can't fight when one partner walks out of the room. But also develop a sense of timing. If your spouse comes home from work and tells you about a fight with the boss, that the car got a flat tire and the IRS sent an audit notice, don't ask him/her why he/she forgot about your vacation tickets.
2. **NEVER USE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**
3. **FIGHT FAIR** - Never say "never" or "always" about your spouse. Arguments that contain phrases "You never..." or "You always..." are, in fact, almost never accurate.
4. **STICK TO THE SUBJECT** - Make sure that what you're fighting about is really what you're fighting about. It's important to uncover what's really causing your anger. Chances are it is not what started the disagreement in the first place.
5. **DON'T BRING UP PAST HISTORY** - Stick to the topic at hand. Don't end up covering every dissatisfaction you have felt for the past....years. Anything over 48 hours old is old news and is better left forgotten.
6. **DON'T CALL EACH OTHER NAMES** - Keep your comments to "I" instead of "You". Stick to your own feelings; that keeps you on familiar ground. Name calling is character assassination, not fighting.
7. **NEVER THREATEN TO WITHDRAW LOVE OR SEX**
8. **FINISH THE FIGHT** - Don't burst into tears or walk or run away from it. Be willing to accept that some things can't be resolved. Marriage requires compromise and accommodation. That sometimes means accepting things you'll never like.
9. **NEVER SAY, "I TOLD YOU SO!"** - Marriage isn't a competition. If you're proven to be right be gracious and just let it slide.
10. **TAKE THE OTHER'S COMPLAINTS SERIOUSLY** - There is nothing more infuriating than having something you care about brushed off. Respect things that are important to each other. What matters is that it matters to your spouse.

11. **PRACTICE SAYING, "I'M SORRY", OR "I WAS WRONG."** If you were wrong say so. There is nothing terrible about being wrong on occasions. Marriage is one arena where, when one partners wins, both partners lose.
12. **HOLD HANDS OR LOOK AT EACH OTHER** - Touching or eye contact helps to remind you or your spouse that they are more important than anyone or anything else.
13. **MAKING UP** - Be sincere. Make up and mean it. Don't be bitter or carry a grudge. It's over, now forget.

The best guidelines to take with you is to be as protective of your spouse's well-being as you are of your own. That way you will be able to fight productively and you'll be well on your way to a warm, rewarding relationship.