

## 10 Rules for Friendly Fighting

*“There are negative and unhealthy ways to fight, but disagreeing is not unhealthy”*

*Laurie Mintz.*

*The simple set of rules for fair fighting (see reverse) build on and expand on the positive, collaborative and cooperative aspects of couple’s communications. They may already be the unspoken or stated rules of engagement within your relationship and as such may sound surprisingly familiar. These are communication tips to ensure your conflicts strengthen your marriage instead of harming it.*

# 10 Rules for Friendly Fighting

**#1 Clearly define the issue and stick to it. Go after the issue, NOT after each other.**

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**#2 Choose a mutually suitable time.**

Choose a time that suits you both and when there is enough time to deal with the issues.

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**#3 Choose a suitable space.**

Choose a room that is private, preferably not your bedroom, where you know you will not be disturbed or disturb anyone.

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**#4 Listen to each other.**

Give the other person the opportunity to express their anger, resentment and other feelings and have their say. This literally means taking turns: when one speaks, the other should be listening, reflecting back what they hear.

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**#5 Do not drag in the past.**

Stick to the particular issue that is the subject of the fight.

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**#6 Express anger, but DO NOT resort to abuse, shouting, swearing, insults, physical violence (to person or property), blame or name calling.**

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**#7 STOP if you cannot keep the communication straight.**

Agree to stop if either one of you feels that the fight is no longer straight and related to the specific issue. You can resume again once you have both had time for reflection.

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**#8 When necessary, use time-outs.**

Taking time-outs may mean signalling your own needs – use an agreed hand sign and/or say an agreed 'safe word'. Then, one of the couple leaves the area, and may return to the same place to continue the discussion, if they so choose, after 5 minutes.

Remember no amount of talking will lead to problem-solving if you are not in a state of mind to solve problems.

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**#9 Agree to differ.**

Having a friendly fight does not imply you have to end up agreeing. You may, in fact, agree to differ and then later work out a compromise solution to the problem.

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**#10 Agree to discuss a compromise.**

Often what is required in a tricky situation is a creative compromise. When people have expressed their anger and voiced their disquiet, they may be more ready to negotiate a realistic, workable compromise.

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