

Fighting Fair Techniques

All people, no matter how much they care, will disagree.
Try the following ideas when disagreements arise.

- ◆ Only deal with one problem at a time. Hold back from bringing up the past. If something that happened in the past is bothering you, wait until you have talked through what *just* happened before you bring it up.
- ◆ Describe how the problem affects you. Share your feelings with "I" messages instead of "you" phrases. "You" carries blame. Avoid sarcasm and he said/she said.
- ◆ Describe the problem without attacking the other person. Shouting, blaming, and put downs just make the situation worse. Remember, no one *always* or *never* does something wrong or right.
- ◆ Ask how the person is feeling. Don't guess or tell a person what to think or how to feel.
- ◆ Keep an open mind and listen to what the other person says. Avoid interrupting or putting words into the other person's mouth. Don't take the position that you *have to be right* all the time.
- ◆ Talk without interruptions. Turn off the television or radio. If someone calls during this time, call them back later or turn on your answering machine.
- ◆ Keeping a sense of humor is okay, but do not make fun of the other person.
- ◆ Wait until the effects of drugs or alcohol have worn off. If you are intoxicated, you won't be able to think clearly or know what is really going on. This goes for the other person, too.
- ◆ Don't try to have 1 winner and 1 loser. If a discussion ends this way, you will both lose. Be willing to compromise. Sometimes the best you can do is agree to disagree.
- ◆ Take a break if you are not getting any closer to reaching an agreement. This gives each person time to think about what they want to happen and possible solutions. Agree when you will talk about the problem again before you leave.
- ◆ Do not destroy property. Tearing up letters, poems or pictures will not help work out the problem. And you may regret it later.
- ◆ There is *NEVER* an excuse for using violence. This includes using threats ("I can find someone else!"), coercion ("if you really loved me..."), and physical violence.
- ◆ Once you have come up with a solution to the problem, remember it doesn't have to be permanent. Try it for awhile and if it doesn't work for one of you, talk about it and try something else.

GUIDELINES FOR 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.
- Stick to the present: Don't dredge up past mistakes and faults about which you can do nothing about.
- Stick to the subject: Limit this fight to this subject. Don't throw every other problem into it; take them at a different time.
- 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 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.
- Respect crying: It is a valid response to how we feel, but don't let crying sidetrack you. It is a response for men as well as women.
- No violence: Physical violence violates all of the above rules for fighting by mutual consent.

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

WORDS WORDS WORDS

"No-No" Words

"I'm sorry."
"I told you so."
"You always."
"I don't want to discuss it."
"When will you ever listen?"
"How many times do I have to tell you?"

"Yes" Words

"I need you."
"Please help me."
"I did wrong."
"Thank you."
"I love you"
"I'm sorry."