

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FAIR FIGHTING

1. Be specific when you introduce a gripe.
2. Don't just complain, no matter how specifically; ask for a reasonable change that will relieve the gripe.
3. Ask for and give feedback of the major points to make sure you are heard, to assure your partner that you understand what he wants.
4. Confine yourself to one issue at a time. Otherwise, you may skip back and forth, evading the hard ones.
5. Do not be glib or intolerant. Be open to your own feelings and equally open to your partners.
6. Always consider compromise. Remember, your partner's view of reality may be just as real as yours, even though they may differ. There are not many totally objective realities.
7. Do not allow counter-demands to enter the picture until the original demands are clearly understood, and there has been clear cut response to them.
8. Never assume that you know what your partner is thinking until you have checked out the assumption in plain language; nor assume or predict how he will react, what he will accept or reject.
9. Don't mind rape. Ask. Do not correct a partner's statement of his own feelings. Do not tell a partner what he should know or do or feel.
10. Never put labels on a partner. Call him neither a coward, nor a neurotic, nor a child. If you really believed that he was incompetent or suffering from some hopeless basic flaw, you probably would not be with him. Do not make sweeping labeling judgements about his feelings, especially about whether or not they are real or important.
11. Sarcasm is dirty fighting.
12. Forget the past and stay with the here and now. What either of you did last year or last month or that morning is not as important as what you are doing and feeling now. And the changes you ask cannot possibly be retroactive. Hurts, grievances and irritations should be brought up at the very earliest moment, or the partner has the right to suspect that they may have been saved carefully as weapons.

13. Do not overload your partner with grievances. To do so makes him feel hopeless and suggests that you have either been hoarding complaints or have not thought through what really troubles you.
14. Meditate. Take time to consult your real thoughts and feelings before speaking. Your surface reactions may make something deeper and more important. Don't be afraid to close your eyes and think.
15. Remember that there is never a single winner in an honest intimate fight. Both either win more intimacy or lose it.

GLOSSARY

Agression -

An angry reaction to the frustration produced by the problems of a close relationship.

Belt Line -

The limit of hurt tolerance below which partners cannot absorb blows or hurts without serious injury to the relationship. Honest open communication teaches partners to define clearly, to expose rather than hide, to respect by agreement their weak spots or belt lines and to adjust them if they are too high or too low. Hitting below the belt line is not fair fighting.

Conflict -

A more or less constant state of tension in a relationship, which when accepted and worked through in a constructive manner, yields an intimate closeness.

Contract -

A workable agreement between partners to help handle conflicts when they occur.

Distancing -

Realizing that both partners are not always comfortable at the same closeness level.

Feedback -

Repeating back to your partner what you have heard and felt in order to check out that you have heard them correctly.

Gunny-sacking -

Storing up unexpressed anger, frustration and resentment.

Imaging -

Presenting a picture of one's self that prevents rejection and when checked out with the partner, frequently proves false.

Impacting -

Successfully asserting one's wishes, feelings or identity to a partner.

Intimacy -

A relationship of trust and sharing, without a fear of dealing openly with conflict, which permits the partners the experience and expression of their feelings.

Leveling -

A realistic and honest expression about how one truly feels in an intimate relationship, especially concerning the more conflict producing or hurtful aspects. A way of communicating that is essential for discovering the areas of conflict.

Meditation -

Focusing one's attention for the best possible perception of one's own feelings, before expressing them or acting them out.

Mind-Reading -

Making assumptions about the thoughts or feelings of another without checking them out with the other person.

Mind-Raping -

Telling a partner what he thinks or feels, or what he ought to think or feel. Ignoring or even over-riding what the partner actually thinks and feels.

Molding -

Verbally expressing to a partner what one would like him to be in relation to oneself.

Relationship review -

Regular review by a pair of where they stand with one another, of attractions, reservations, conflicts, joy and so on.

Role-bound -

Behaving in specific sex-symbol roles (ex. doctor, mother) expected femininity or expected masculinity.

Sexual stereotyping -

Fixed ideas of the role and characteristics, both positive and negative, of the opposite sex without checking it out with your partner.

Smoothing -

Repressing one's feelings of anger or frustration in order to maintain a state of peace.

Thinging -

Treating another or oneself as if the person is only an object, machine, role or symbol.