

12 Fair Fighting Rules

- 1. No one ever “WINS” a fight.** With every word and every action, you either increase, maintain or decrease the trust and respect in your relationship.
- 2. Listen first.** Truly understand the other person’s position first. (*Stephen Covey Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood*)
- 3. Remain in the present.** Do not use the past as a weapon or baggage.
- 4. Ask for what you want.** Avoid nagging or complaining. Replace whining and blaming with problem-solving. Example: Rather than saying, *“I can’t deal with you. You’re a lazy slob!”* Try this, *“Let’s discuss how we can cooperate with each other more effectively.”*
- 5. Be specific.** No vague references, generalizations or mind reading allowed. Avoid exaggerations like “all” and “never.” Provide specific examples and quotes to clarify your intention. For example: replace *“You never help me, all you do is stare at your phone ”* with *“I need your help. Would you please put down your phone and give me a hand with this?”* Replace: *“You never want to have sex”* with *“I’d like to talk about our sex life. What can I do to improve our intimacy? What do you need from me?”*
- 6. Avoid making assumptions.** Ask for clarification. Be sure you know exactly what is intended. *“What is your intention?” “Help me understand ” “Tell me more”*
- 7. Resolve one issue at a time.** Do not bring up a new topic until you have closure on the first issue. *“I’d like to address that problem next, but first let’s resolve the original issue.”*
- 8. Give feedback.** *“I think your point is...”* Also, ask for feedback. *“What did you hear me say?”*
- 9. Practice negotiating.** Seek win/win solutions. Explore opportunities for cooperation.
- 10. Do not “should” on anyone.** Unsolicited advice is commonly referred to as *nagging*. Do not tell another adult what he/she *should* know, do, think or feel.
- 11. Seek common ground, notice where you agree.** *“We both want....” “We feel the same way about...” “We can agree that ...”*
- 12. No bullying or aggression allowed.** *Walk away before your anger contaminates the conversation. If your words or actions are unkind, STOP* Avoid use of guilt, manipulation, control or intimidation.. Allow others to walk away when they become angry. Do not pursue an angry person with the intention of *forcing* more communication or blocking the exit.

