



# HOW TO MAKE YOUR FIGHTS FAIR

*Arguments can be constructive if you stick to some rules for fighting fair.*

**Face each other. Look each other in the eye as you discuss problems.** This is particularly difficult for those of us who shout nasty comments, slam down the phone or slam a door. This leaves no room for discussion because the other person is absent. Turn off the TV, put down the newspaper and be present.

**Ignore distractions. Stay on topic.** When the facts start pointing to my being at fault, I resort to 'rabbit trails' those side issues I bring up to throw the pursuer off the subject. While rabbit trails may save me from facing the facts, they guarantee that the same argument will resurface at a later date. Leave those distractions alone and resolve the one at hand.

**Guard your tongue. Apply the NO PYNS rule: no Put-downs, no Yelling, no Name calling and no Swearing.** Avoid name calling and swearing; it shows you don't have anything intelligent to say. More important, it attacks the other person's character. Once name calling enters the ring, the other person won't hear anything you say, no matter how right you might be. They become too busy trying to defend themselves rather than listening to you.

**Halt the history** because it doesn't belong in arguments. Bringing up the past communicates to the other person that nothing will ever change and that the past has not been forgiven.

**Timing is everything.** No one wants to argue when they are tired, hungry, or emotional. When you are any of these, your frame of mind does not work properly. At the end of the day or right before bed are when we are more susceptible to these feelings. Negotiate a time when both are able to discuss the issue.

**“I” statements are important to use**; it takes away the accusatory “YOU...” Blaming statements. The statement is started by “I feel (state your emotion) when (describe the action) because (state the effect).”

**Neutral Location. Be in a safe** place that will allow you to walk away from the situation if it gets heated. Kitchen and bathroom are areas that can be small and confining, with objects that can be easily thrown when angry.

**Get comfortable and sit down.** You are both at the same level when you are sitting down together. When someone stands over you, it becomes intimidating and it becomes easier to fight when you are in an attack stance.

*When a fight is escalating, ask yourself, “How important will this be to me three months from now?”*

Using the FIGHTING technique, arguments tend to be shorter and both people end up ‘winning’ with a renewed sense of love and commitment to each other and that is worth fighting for.

*Family Counselling Centre, May 2008*