

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

FAIR FIGHTING GUIDELINES

1. Remember: In a fair fight there is no winner and no loser.
2. The aim of a fair fight is a solution.
3. Whenever either person tries to prove himself right and the other person wrong, this is dirty fighting.
4. Be specific when you bring up a gripe.
5. Don't just complain, no matter how specifically. Ask for a reasonable change that will relieve the gripe.
6. Ask for and give feedback of the major points, to make sure you are heard and to assure your partner that you understand what he wants.
7. Confine yourself to one issue at a time. Otherwise, you may skip back and forth, evading the hard ones.
8. Do not be glib or intolerant. Be open to your own feelings, and equally open to your partner's.
9. 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.
- 10 Always consider compromise
11. Remember: Another person's viewpoint is just as real to them as yours is to you, even though you may differ.
12. Never believe that you know what another person is thinking until you ask him in plain language.
13. Do not assume or predict how another person will react, what he will accept or reject.
14. Do not correct another person's description of his own feelings. Do not try to tell another what he should know or do or feel.
15. Sarcasm is dirty fighting.

16. Never put labels on a person while fighting. For example, do not call him a coward or a child. If you really believed that he was so hopelessly flawed, you probably would not be with him.
17. Do not make sweeping, labeling judgments about another person's feelings, especially about whether or not they are real or important.
18. Do not use past events as weapons. Stay with here and now. Ask for changes that can begin now. Changes cannot 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.
19. Do not overload another person with complaints. Try to work on one thing at a time. Otherwise, the other person may feel hopeless and think you have been hoarding complaints or have not thought through what is really troubling you.
20. Meditate. Take time to check 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.
21. Remember that there is never a single winner in an honest, intimate fight. Both either win more intimacy, or lose it.

Nothing is easier than fault-finding; no talent, no self-denial, no brains, no character are required to set up in the grumbling business.

ROBERT WEST