

Love & Relationship Quizzes, eBooks for Couples
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Fair Fighting for Couples

When a negative event happens and we are triggered by our partners, we can feel that a fight is imminent. But before you launch into a defensive tirade, ask yourself why it is that you are so annoyed, frustrated, angry etc. Are you upset because of some mess or inconvenience? Are you annoyed overdoing the donkey's share of household chores, and this event proves you are right? Stop, and consider, why you are triggered before you start blaming or provoking a domestic argument and spoiling the peace...

One topic per negotiation/ discussion

Arguments often use fallacies. One of my favourites is the slippery slope argument. Things become exaggerated and move from one topic to old, topics of loss and blame. Suddenly, a few more logs get thrown on the fire. A flippant accusation like, "You are always spending money that we don't have" suddenly becomes "You don't care how hard I work to make that money. You mustn't love me." Fallacy arguments are common in domestic fights and they often loop in old arguments or more than one topic. Alas, two for the price of one is not helpful math when negotiating. Moreover, when a heated discussion goes off-topic, it can become a character assassination, loading on the faults and past mistakes of that person. Sadly, because all adults feel like children when they are berated by people they care about, it can create some strong defensive positions that people will defend to the death: The death of the relationship.

Don't use degrading language

It is better to discuss the problem as being a third party, than pointing out the behaviour of the person. Try not to belittle, put-down, swear at, insult or call your partner names. Yes, you are feeling bad, but emotions come and go. Your moment of name-calling might never be forgiven. If you are uncomfortable in your argument, then trust me, so is the other person. No one likes fighting. Speak your words with care and try not to be personal. Otherwise, they might be the last words that they hear from you.

Try speaking like a toddler. Tell the person what your needs are and your feelings. Talk about your experience rather than what they are doing wrong. "You never want to have sex anymore" is better said as an "I" phrase. "I feel close to you when we make love and it hurts me when you push me away."

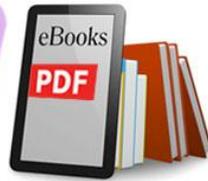
Express how you feel and keep it from your experience. Remove the word "you" from your vocab. Using the word "you" is the quickest way to start a heated debate because it is accusatory and makes the other party defensive.

One person talks at a time

If you can, slow down the discussion. Listen to hear and understand, not to respond. Try not to interrupt.

The art of avoidance

It is not uncommon for partners to use avoidance in conflict resolution. They may retreat (run) as their method for defense. Sometimes, people sulk and won't talk (stonewalling), but all this does is to leave the issue unresolved. As a rule, women tend to be the chasers and men the stonewallers; although there are exceptions. Chasers can get more infuriated as stonewallers retreat and stonewallers will feel attacked by chasers or feel that their anger is not safe. Agree to take a time out and then speak frankly to each other with respect.



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No raising your voice

Some people think that if they are louder than the other person, they are actually winning the argument. But no one wins an argument if the negotiation is not fair or productive. Too many arguments can become exhausting and if they are also abusive, they have the habit of causing a separation. 85% of separations involved verbal abuse! Negotiations are important for balancing the power dynamic between couples who have different needs and desires. However, if things get out of hand, remember to take time out. Put a pin in the argument and agree to come back to it at a time you both agree on and that is suitable in your family schedule. But do make sure that you come back to it, otherwise, the unresolved issues will pile up, and be brought up, the next time things become heated.

A satisfactory understanding

There is a metaphor that says, one battle does not win the war. Sometimes, it is better to concede on a small point that does not matter so much to you, but matters to the other person. We can't always be happy with the outcome of negotiations, but we can be satisfied that it is the best outcome at the time with the skills that we have.

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