

# Fair Fighting Rules

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Every intimate relationship has conflict. According to researcher John Gottman, you don't have to fix all your perpetual problems to have a happy marriage. Success is far more dependent on how you address the conflict. Many couples find success with clearly defining 'Fair Fighting Rules'. Each partner starts with their own rules of engagement and then makes requests from their partner to make additions.

Below are some examples to get you started:

No name calling or labeling

Stay on topic on in the present

Speak for yourself and complain without blame:

"When...I think...So I...Underneath that, I feel...because I tell myself...."

No mind reading.

Instead, check out what you are thinking: "Are you saying that..." "When you do that I think it means.... Is that true?" Just because you have an emotional reaction to something, doesn't mean it's true.

Own your beliefs. Just because you think something "should" be a certain way, doesn't mean everyone else operates from that belief. You can ask for what you want, but assuming or demanding won't bring you closer.

Take responsibility for your part, rather than distracting from it:

I'm sorry that I \_\_\_\_\_. I would like to \_\_\_\_\_ (correct, fix it, or do what I originally agreed).

I'd also like to \_\_\_\_\_(rebuild trust).

Focus on what you have control over.

Avoid Explaining your opinion when attached to changing/negating the other

Ask questions to help you understand the other person:

Don't minimize, dismiss, or ignore their communication. You don't have to agree, but understanding can help you grow closer, even during conflict.

Self-Sooth:

Breathe, Take Breaks

Do anger work in private so you can communicate with safe energy

Start by making your own list of what you commit to. Then, share with your partner and negotiate until you come to agreement. See the Accountability Work article to help you stick to your commitment for more effective conflict resolution.

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Differences don't have to mean difficulty.

I help stressed out couples stop fighting and start communicating.

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