

# Fair fighting



## What sort of fighter are you?

- Do you avoid conflict at all costs?
- Do you feel that any criticism or disagreement is an attack on you?
- Do you hit “below the belt” and regret it later?
- Do you always have to be right, or win at all costs?
- Do you feel out of control when conflict arises?
- Do you withdraw and become silent when angry?
- Do you store up complaints from the distant past?

These are the tools you need to manage conflict:

- A sense of fairness
- Putting your marriage/the relationship first
- Willingness to forgive
- Ability to listen
- Respect for one another
- Awareness of when to apologise

Here are the rules:

- NO physical violence or emotional abuse while fighting
- No name calling
- Stick to the topic
- No lying or exaggerating as in “you always” or “you never”
- Don’t dig up the past
- Take time out if you need to
- No ultimatums or threats
- No “mind reading”

And some other things to aim for

- **Take responsibility** – use I statements. Everything is rarely ALL the other persons fault. How have you contributed?
- **Be direct and honest** about your feelings and what you want – don’t expect the other person to “just know” or that they will figure it out. This means you have to figure out what you are feeling and what you want!
- **Listen and hear!** Try to deal with the other person’s perceptions of the situation as well as your own. Be aware of his/her feelings as well as your own. Check to see whether what you heard is really what the other person is trying to express, and ask him to let you know what she hears you saying.
- **Give the other person equal time.** Both people need to express their feelings and points of view to create a full mutual understanding.
- **Focus on solving a problem/reaching a solution** rather than venting your anger or winning a victory. Think win-win.
- **Limit your discussion/fight to no more than 30 minutes.** Adults have relatively short attention spans. Long drawn out discussions/fights rarely reach resolution. Instead they just wear the participants out. And when you are worn out, the potential of saying or doing something you’ll regret is much greater. If you are unable to solve your problem in the 30 minutes that you’ve allotted, schedule another time to continue.