14 Fair Fighting Rules

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To safeguard your relationship, fair fighting rules can be put in place. Take a look.

* No degrading:  Character attacks and name calling are off-limits!
* No blaming:  There is no end in blaming.  It will get you going around and around in a dance of blame.  Focus on problem solving and solutions instead.
* No yelling:  Speak in a calm voice.  If your partner begins to escalate, lower your voice and remind him or her that you will not continue the conversation until you are spoken to in a respectful way.  It is okay to say, “I will not tolerate being spoken to in that way.”
* Stay in the here and now:  As tempting as it might be, refrain from bringing up old unresolved issues.  Keep the conversation in the present and work at resolving the current issue at hand.  Just because Johnny or Suzie did A,B,or C in the past, does not give you a free ticket now.  If your partner brings up a present concern, and you reply by bringing up something that he or she did in the past, you will have succeeded in shutting down your partner’s concern, but at what cost?  Another unresolved issue to put on the back burner, only to fester and slowly dissolve the relationship?  Is that what you really want?  Or do you want to resolve your partner’s issue at hand?
* Divorce threat is off-limits:  Threatening to leave your partner creates great instability within the relationship.  This instability and lack of trust will last much longer than the argument.
* Use “I” rather than “You” statements:  Your partner will be much less defensive when he or she hears “I feel frustrated with the amount of work that needs to be done” rather than “You never help me around here.”
* No finger-pointing (literally):  Your partner will feel attacked and communication will be shut down if you point your finger at his or her face.
* Take the words “always” and “never” out of your vocabulary:  These words are often used as an over generalization and are seldom true.  Once you use these words, your partner will no longer be listening to you.  Instead, he or she will be poking holes in your “always” or “never” assessment of them.
* Use time outs in conjunction with equal sharing:  Allow your partner to walk away and take a time out.  Use time outs to calm down.  Do not speak your mind and walk away without giving your partner an equal opportunity to share.  That is not the purpose of a time out.
* No sarcasm:  Sarcasm has been defined as both The tearing of  flesh and An ironic remark intended to wound.  Sarcasm is hostile; not a productive way to fight.
* Argue in private:  Never publically embarrass your partner.  It is cruel and emotionally abusive.
* Admit when you are angry:  Allow your partner to do the same.  Telling your partner that he or she shouldn’t feel angry invalidates their feelings.  Like it or not, he or she will still be angry whether they tell you or not.  Unexpressed anger leads to resentment.  Resentment destroys relationships.  Remember that you are entitled to feel the way that you feel; it is your actions that may get you into trouble.
* Focus on solutions rather than who is right:  When either one of you loses, the relationship loses.  You may win the battle, but at what price?  Always, always, always ask yourself, “What is best for the relationship?”
* Allow your partner the right to change his or her mind:  We all have a right to see things in a new light.