Fighting Fair

Basic ground rules for effectively facing conflict in a relationship include:

1. Maintaining a spirit of good will – remember you care about this person
2. Avoid attacking one another – discuss behaviors, not personalities
3. Share your feelings – explore and discuss them
4. Focus on the present – past disappointments cannot be changed. Concentrate on the here and now

Specific Techniques:

1. Choose a time to have the discussion – make it an appointment. Avoid times when either of you are fatigued, ill, or under pressure
2. Be specific. Take time to reflect on what you are upset about and focus on specific actions, feelings, and attitudes
3. Listen carefully. Allow each individual uninterrupted time to explain their viewpoint
4. Work on one issue at a time. Decide what the uppermost concern is and discuss it
5. Ask for reasonable change. Determine what you really want from the person, then ask yourself if it is realistic and authentic
6. Try to accept. Be open to the other person’s feelings and accept them without being judgmental
7. Be willing to compromise and avoid trying to win. Try to find a solution that is satisfying for you both
8. If you have extreme difficulty expressing your feelings, try writing them down in a note or letter
9. After the discussion is over, express your appreciation for the other’s listening to and discussion of the argument with you. Reaffirm your respect and affection for each other. Finish on a positive note