

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**