

HEALTHY ARGUING: HOW TO FIGHT FAIRLY



Do you hate fighting in your relationship? Of course you do! Disagreements are normal in any relationship. The key is to argue respectfully and fairly. Follow these techniques to ensure your relationship stays healthy as possible.

1. Relax and listen. Getting worked up, yelling, and talking over someone only makes YOU feel worse. Stop to listen so each person has a chance to speak.
2. Understand that a person's feelings are real to *them*, even if you disagree (and even if they are wrong!). Don't judge nor tell them how they should feel. Accept their feelings as valid.
3. Say "I" more than "you." The word you carries blame. Your partner will feel attacked. Instead of saying, "Well you always..." say, "I feel _," or "It makes me feel _ when you do this."
4. Avoid sarcasm, snippy remarks, or impulsive comments. Be careful not to say things you don't actually mean. They're unfair, and can cause more arguing.
5. The easiest way to say I'm sorry is simply to say, "I'm sorry." Don't make excuses or try to avoid the truth. If you made a mistake, just say I'm sorry and move on.
6. Talk without interruption. Turn off the TV, put down your phone, and don't glance at your computer. Focused attention shows respect and prevents added argument.
7. If someone is intoxicated, wait. You may want to talk right away, or they may keep pressing it. However, waiting until the effects of drugs or alcohol have worn off is critical. Ask to discuss at a later time, or leave and go elsewhere for a while.
8. There's no 'winner' and 'loser.' It's okay to end by disagreeing. Be willing to compromise and be open to moving forward without a perfect resolution.
9. If an argument feels like it will go on forever, just walk away. Take a walk. Go for a drive. Reflect on some good memories and what you love about them, and then return in a better mood.
10. Don't ever destroy property, throw things, punch walls, or slam doors. NEVER use physical violence. This includes restraining someone, not letting them leave, driving erratically, or threatening to harm a person or their property. This is never an acceptable response, ever.

NOTE: Domestic/Dating Violence is very different. Arguments are not healthy. They are built on power and control. There is a predictable pattern of fighting. You feel like you are walking on eggshells. One partner starts most of the arguments, often out of nowhere for no real reason. Trying to incorporate the techniques above may provide a temporary fix, and increase safety during a severe argument, however, it is critical to recognize that the relationship is abusive. Seek help and support on how to break up safely.