



Guidelines for Fighting Fair in Marriage

By Jay Allbright

Almost every couple spends some time fighting. The key is to keep fighting from getting out of hand and causing irreparable damage is to lay some ground rules so your fighting is fair and less hurtful. *Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.* The process to bitterness is this. **Hurt** leads to **Anger** which leads **Unwillingness to forgive** which leads to **Bitterness**. Bitterness always comes about in this order. *Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;* When you become bitter it makes everything around you seem bitter. There is a green fluid in your bladder called gall. Sometimes you cough this fluid up when you are sick. It is very bitter and you cannot get the taste out of your mouth. The Bible makes a comparison to this bitter fluid in our bladder and the effect of bitterness in our life. *Acts 8:23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*

1. **Deal with issues as they happen.** Don't let little things that bother you build up until one of you explodes the issue into a large fight. That's not fighting fair in your marriage.
2. **Observe a time limit.** If you are angry about something and don't try to talk about it with your spouse within 48 hours, let it go. Otherwise, you are not fighting fair because it does neither of you any benefit to bring up historical events. If more than 48 hours passes you probably will not have all the facts correct anyway.
3. **Set up an appointment.** If your spouse doesn't want to discuss the matter, set an appointment within the next 24 hours to have your fair fight. It is okay to go to bed angry. It is often better to go to bed angry that to say something you won't be able to take back. You need your sleep and you need to cool off and think carefully about what you are going to say. Just make sure that the issue is addressed the next day.
4. **Know what the issue is.** Fighting fair means both of you know what the issue is. Then, both of you stick to the subject.
5. **Keep your fight between the two of you.** Don't bring in third parties like your mother-in-law, his best friend, or your children, especially the children.
6. **No hitting below the belt.** Fighting fair means you don't hit below the belt. People who are extremely hurtful become the most wrong even if they were the one that was right. Respect your spouse.
7. **Don't become historical.** Fighting fair means you don't bring up past history.
8. **Don't get personal.** Fighting fair means no name calling. Even endearing terms and pet names can be hurtful when you are using a sarcastic tone.
9. **Laughter doeth good like a medicine, except...** Be careful how you use humor. Laughter is good, but teasing can be misinterpreted and can be hurtful. Some people have actually learned how to use humor in a hurtful way on purpose.

10. **Work at listening.** Listen to one another fully while you fight. This includes watching body language. Look at one another while you speak.
11. **Don't be rude.** Don't interrupt during your fight. Wait until the other speaks but don't continue to speak to take away the others opportunity to speak.
12. **Don't play the "Blame Game".** Fighting fair means you don't blame one another and make accusations.
13. **Take the credit.** Try to use 'I' sentences instead of 'you' sentences.
14. **Physical touch if possible.** If the two of you are not extremely angry, try to hold hands while talking during your fight.
15. **Forgive and be forgiven.** Be open to asking for forgiveness and being willing to forgive. Remember there is nothing that can't be forgiven. If Christ hanging from the cross could look down on those who beat him, pierced his side, plucked out his beard, spit on him, mocked him and abandoned him and still say "Father forgive them" certainly we can forgive.

Truths to remember in a fight:

1. The greatest things in the world happen to those who choose to forgive. Even though it may be hard to forgive your spouse, not forgiving can cause more harm both emotionally and physically to yourself and to your marriage. Holding a grudge is letting someone else live in your head rent free. Bitterness comes from a lack of forgiveness. *Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*
2. Remember to not fight to win, but to fight for your relationship. *Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*
3. Conflict is not the problem. All married couples have disagreements. It's not knowing how to effectively argue that creates difficulty in a marriage. *Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*
4. Don't use the words "never" and "always" in your statements to one another. *Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:*
5. Do not yell. Do not scream. Do not talk in a threatening tone. *Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*