

## FAIR FIGHTING RULES

**Key Concepts:** Unfair fights are usually the result of one or both parties feeling not listened to and/or attacked.

In relationships, there are no winners in an unfair fight

We need to reframe our thinking regarding conflict

From: winning/fighting/venting/convincing

To: resolving differences, increasing our understanding,  
solving problems

**1. Consistently show RESPECT, like you were talking to a co-worker or your boss.**

A. No name calling, labeling, putting other person's ideas/opinions down

B. No yelling – keep volume at a conversational level

C. Watch your nonverbal communication (90% of communication )

Do Not roll eyes, shake head, point finger, sigh, invade personal space

Do establish good eye contact, have open posture

**2. 48 Hour Rule** – don't bring up old issues (usually the “kitchen sink” is brought up to build our “winning case” – there are no winners!)

**3. Take responsibility for your own feelings, values, opinions**

Use “I” statements – Example: “I feel \_\_\_\_, when \_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_.”

Avoid “You” statements – suggests blame, usually leads to defensiveness, rationalizations, and counterattack

**4. Avoid words that suggest extremes or moral absolutes:** Always, Never, Everytime, Should, Must

**5. Use active listening skills** – listen until you fully understand the other's viewpoint before presenting your own (this alone may be enough to resolve differences)

Listen

Paraphrase back what you heard

Wait until the other says you got it.

6. **Remember: It's ok to disagree** – you can agree to disagree

Often, fights are caused by differences in values, not objective rights or wrongs

7. **Take a brief time-out if the intensity gets too high** – this, however, is a protective measure to prevent harming the relationship – agree to pick up the discussion later (5 minutes, 1 hour, later that night)

### **Other Key Ideas:**

Pick your spot – Timing is Everything (consider discussing it when you are getting along; when out for dinner, for example)

Balance out loving criticism, with affirmation of strengths

Remember the other person is probably not intentionally trying to harm you  
- Most of us see ourselves as well-intentioned

When you encounter resistance/defensiveness/anger:

**STOP,  
DROP,  
AND ROLL**

Go into listening mode

Do not argue or attack although that is the natural response

Paraphrase words back, identify and validate feelings

Restate your point

Pretend the other person is your client, customer, boss, friend

Do you want to be RIGHT, or HAPPY/Understood/Cared for ... etc.