



## Healthy & Resilient You

# Fight Fair

Build Connection One Argument at a Time



Of all the things people enjoy about romantic relationships, “having a fight with my partner” is probably low on the list. Disagreements are often tiring and sometimes painful.

But here’s the thing: conflict doesn’t have to be damaging. In fact, the way you handle an argument can bring you closer. With a few simple shifts—like unlearning old habits and trying out new ones—fights can become moments of growth instead of moments of regret.

### Why Healthy Conflict Is a Good Thing

Many people see arguments as a red flag in a relationship. But avoiding conflict altogether? That’s where things can really go sideways. Unprocessed emotions don’t just disappear. They build up, creating distance between you and your partner until something small eventually sparks a big blow-up.

By contrast, couples who argue (the right way) experience some pretty surprising upsides, including:



**Less emotional overload.** Talking things through keeps resentments from building up in the background.



**Lower stress and greater trust.** Approaches like active listening help both partners feel heard and safer with each other.



**Stronger connection.** Couples often walk away from hard conversations with a deeper sense of intimacy and teamwork.

The first step toward these benefits is letting go of the idea that there has to be a winner and a loser at the end of an argument.

### Winning the Argument Isn’t Worth Losing the Relationship

Maybe it’s Hollywood. Maybe it’s pro wrestling. Or Scrabble. Wherever it comes from, a lot of us grow up thinking conflict means someone wins and someone loses. That mindset might make for great

TV, but in real-world relationships, it's a recipe for disaster. Even if you "win" the argument, you risk losing something far more important—connection, trust, and long-term closeness.

What if arguments aren't battles at all? What if we approached them as puzzles—problems we could solve together? Approaching conflict as teammates shifts the goal from being right to getting it right. It's not you versus your partner. It's the two of you versus the issue at hand.

Think of it like doubles tennis: when partners talk to each other mid-match, it's not fighting, it's figuring out how to cover the court together. In the same way, arguments can be an opportunity to share what you need, voice what's not working, and listen with curiosity. The goal isn't for one person to win; it's to find a way forward that leaves both of you feeling *happy enough* to stay in the game.

## How to Fight with Love, Even When You're Mad as Heck

Even the most loving couples get into it sometimes. What matters isn't whether you argue, it's how you argue. The trick? Slow things down enough to **observe the problem, understand where your partner is coming from, and respond in a more constructive way.** Applying the following techniques can help keep things respectful, productive, and connective—even when emotions run high.



**Name the Crime, Not the Criminal:** When you're frustrated, focus on what happened, not who's to blame. Instead of "Why are you always so lazy with the dishes?" try "When the dishes pile up, I feel overwhelmed." Calling out actions (not character) helps prevent defensiveness and keeps the conversation on track.



**Take a Time Out:** Arguing isn't a sport and there's no prize for powering through. If your heart's racing and emotions are boiling over, it's okay (and smart) to press pause.

Step away for 20 minutes and come back when you're both in a better place to talk reasonably. Just remember to treat time-outs as a reset, not a way to avoid conflict.



**Say No to Yes/No Questions:** Rapid-fire yes/no questions can feel like an interrogation, shutting down real communication. Open-ended questions create space for honesty and connection. Try: "What's bothering you most about this?" or "What would make this easier for you?"



**Dig for the Hidden Need:** Anger often masks something deeper—like hurt, fear, or feeling unseen. When your partner snaps, don't react in kind, instead, ask, "What do you need right now?" That small shift can dissolve tension and help you see what's underneath the anger.



**Put Your Heads Together:** Collaborating on solutions reinforces that team mindset, and you're more likely to follow through on plans you create together.

**Say What You'll Do Differently:** Being clear about what you'll do differently next time builds trust and helps you stay on track. Try: "Next time I'm stressed, I'll say 'I need 10 minutes' instead of snapping." Specific plans lead to fewer repeat offenses (and fewer regrets).

### PRO TIP

**Use Your Concern Benefits!** Your membership includes access to **OurRelationship**, an inclusive online program that helps couples understand and solve common relationship challenges—on their own or with support from a program coach. [Click here](#) for more details.



Finally, remember that every relationship has rough patches. But when you approach conflict with curiosity, empathy, and a team mindset, those moments can bring you closer instead of pushing you apart.

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