



Chaplain's Life Enrichment Program

Keeping Love Alive

*how to have a good fight
conflict management for couples*

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Conflict is normal

- It is neither good nor bad . . . but inevitable!
- All unresolved conflict weakens relationships
- Couples who fight fair stay together

Conflict can be . . .

- Difference of opinion or approach
- Competing interests & goals
- To further hidden agendas
- Value conflicts
- Unclear/unspoken
- Space needs - *“Keep your distance”*
 - *“Do not disturb - refueling!”*

Goal of this Workshop . . .

How to fight fair & constructively

Constructive fighting is a skill which:

- Reduces tension & frustration
- Live with fewer inhibitions and no lies
- Free to grow emotionally
- Become more productive, creative
- Feel less guilty about negative emotions
- Worry less about what cannot be changed
- Less likely to divorce
- Do a better job raising the children
- Improved communication
- Face fewer unpleasant surprises
- Feel less vulnerable

Common but unhealthy

- Kitchen Sink Fighting - throw in everything
- Mt. Vesuvius - build up and erupt
- Laundry List - “remember when you ...”

**Conflict resolution is essential
to a healthy, growing relationship.**



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Fight Dialogue

(Stalemate, round-robin, merry-go-round)

Partner A: *(wearily) I know, I know. God, how many times have we been through all this before? I know you hate it.*

Partner B: *(exasperated) So why in hell don't you quit?*

A: *I've told you and told you! That's just the way I am! Don't you know that by now?*

B: *Sure, but I'll never get used to it, and it's driving me up the wall!*

A: *Why don't you get off my back about the same old stuff? What's the use? Your not going to change me!*

B: *Well, neither can I ...*

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When and Where to

WORST - when one partner gets home from work

BEST - fight by appointment only,
set a time and a place

Remember - alcohol contaminates fights.
It does NOT improve them!

Bad fighting techniques

- **uninvited character analysis**
- **stereotyping**
- **let down partner's expectations**
- **change the subject**
- **attack your partner's Achille's Heel**
- **passive aggressive styles**
- **create disorder --> crisis maker**
- **physical force - never acceptable**

How to fight fair

- **Respect your partner's *Achille's Heel***
- **Fight for *understanding*, not *knockouts***
- **Seek mutual goodwill**
- **Shout "*foul*" when your partner hits below the belt**
- **Never drive partner up against the wall**
- **Elicit information about feelings**
 - "*What are you trying to tell me?*"
 - "*Help me to understand.*"
 - "*Let me tell you how I heard it.*"

How a fight escalates

Issue --> Personality --> Relationship

- 1. Fight over a specific issue**
escalates to
- 2. Personality level**
which escalates to
- 3. Relationship level**
"I want a divorce!"

Fighting by Mail & Telephone

- Does not permit two-way communication
 - Can be used to exaggerate emotional states*
- Telephone - *a good place to begin if a couple cannot talk face to face*

Body language is lost

Can be very misused

“attack and hang up”

Unhealthy fighting styles

- **Monologuers**
- **One-way ragers**
- **Fight phobic couples**
- **Indirect jabbers**
- **Hit-and-run tactics**
- **Set up your partner**
- **Ambushers**
- **Buck passers**
- **Colluders**

Healthy fighting techniques

- Choose what conflicts to address and what to let go of
- Stick to the subject
- Deal in potential, not the past
- Don't use the *“silent treatment”*
- Attack the problem, not your partner
- Never say *“you never”* or *“you always”*
- Offer solutions with constructive criticism
- Don't try to force your partner to be your carbon copy
- Be humble - you could be wrong
- Be willing to apologize
- Let the fight end when it's over

Conflict Resolution

- **Compromise**
 - *Neither party gets everything he or she wants, but gets something.*
 - *Each gives up something. Often quite satisfactory to each.*
 - **This resolution is “part-way” for each.**
- **Capitulation**
 - *One partner gives in to what the other wants. This works well when the issue is relatively unimportant to one partner.*
 - **This resolution is “one way.”**

Conflict Resolution

- Co-existence
 - *Partners agree to disagree.*
 - **This resolution is “both ways.”**
- Collaboration
 - *Partners work together to understand the real issues behind the difference and search for a resolution that meets the needs of both.*
 - **This resolution is “both ways.”**

Conflict Styles

1. Placator - *Yield-lose*

low personal goals, high relationship goals

2. Detached - *Lose-leave*

low personal goals, low relationship goals

3. Tough Battler - *Win-lose*

high personal goals, low relationship goals

4. Problem Solver - *Win-win*

high personal goals, high relationship goals

Sample technique for confronting

1. Set a time & place to talk
2. State your intentions & expectations
for the outcome of this meeting
3. State the event
4. State your feelings about the event &
end your statement with a question

Sample technique for confronting

5. Explore all relevant information

- *facts*
- *interpretations*
- *feelings*

6. Repeat your partner's view of the event

7. Explore solutions that would satisfy both of you

8. Offer "*fair exchange*" proposals

9. Test your agreement & commitment

"Give it a try"

Fair Fighting Techniques

1. **Timing** - *set aside a time to discuss the issues*
2. **Stick to the issue**
3. **Choose flexible terms**
4. **Be realistic**
5. **Be responsible**
6. **Affirm your spouse**
7. **Don't analyze**
8. **Be supportive**
9. **Take timelimited cooling off periods**
10. **Compromise**
11. **Don't manipulate**
12. **Avoid money-control tactics**
13. **Model behavior you want your children to adopt**
14. **Be consistent**
15. **Pratice**

Dirty Fighting Techniques

1. **Timing** - *pick the wrong time and place*
2. **Escalation**
3. **Brown bagging**
4. **Over generalize**
5. **Cross-complain**
6. **Interrupt your partner**
7. **Ask why**
8. **Blame**
9. **Pull rank**
10. **Don't listen, dominate**
11. **List injustices**
12. **Label**
13. **Mind read**
14. **Fortune-telling**
15. **Sarcasm**
16. **Avoid responsibility**
17. **Leave**
18. **Reject compromise**
19. **Personalize**
20. **Play the martyr**
21. **Use money**
22. **Use children**
23. **Use relatives**
24. **Give advice**
25. **Get even**
26. **Use terminal language**
27. **Be inconsistent**
28. **Harbor grudges**

Checklist for Handling Conflict

- **View anger and conflict as normal**
- **Agree as a couple that you will work to resolve conflicts**
- **When you are angry, don't attack**
- **Acknowledge your anger, to yourself and to your partner**
- **Look behind the anger to the other feelings**
- **Defuse the anger before trying to reach a solution**
- **Be sure you are dealing with the real issue - be specific**
- **Clear up issues promptly**
- **Be willing to look at alternative solutions**
- **Find a solution in which each partner "wins"**
- **Be willing to apologize**



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In Summary

Fighting (conflict management)
is an ***ART***
which can be learned.