

LEARNING TO FIGHT FAIR

By Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC

As much as we may want relationships to be peaceful, fun, and always loving, the truth is they are not. Often individuals, couples, or families come to my office out of frustration and discouragement with how they are being treated or treating one another. Unfortunately, it is often the case that all parties involved are at their wits end. Understanding the underlying issues and unspoken rules that govern behavior is a part of the healing process. Once identified there are some basic assumptions that can help conflict result with less stress. What follows is an excerpt from the book entitled "Coupleship" by Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse that focuses on some basic guidelines to remember when learning how to fight fair.

1. *Give yourself permission to fight.* Disagreements and fights are natural.
2. *Know why you are fighting.* Be sure that what you fight about is really what you are angry about.
3. *Establish a goal when you fight.* Be sure that you don't fight to win but to clear the air, find a solution, share feelings, gain greater understanding of each other and find a way for both to win.
4. *Fight according to fair rules.* Try not to be hurting, sarcastic, or belittling. Stick to the issue and try to resolve it in a way that will bring you closer. Never, never hit or try to make a point physically by pushing, kicking, or some other form of aggressive contact.
5. *Take responsibility for your own assertion.* Be clear about how you feel and think, and take responsibility for sharing both. Being clear also means being respectful of your rights as well as the rights of others.
6. *Show mutual respect.* Listen with care. Don't blame, accuse, demean, or insult.
7. *Pinpoint the real issue.* Often we have "surface" fights that don't touch the basic issue. Feeling unfairly treated, feeling vengeful and needing to retaliate may be the real basic issue.
8. *Seek areas of agreement.* When two people are very angry with each other, they often think there is absolutely nothing they agree on. They try to prove each other wrong. Find areas of agreement, even if it is only that you don't want a permanent break.
9. *Participate mutually in finding a solution.* Since the conflict involves both of you, it is most helpful if you both seek possible solutions. If both parties offer suggestions on ways to improve things, they have the best chance of reaching an agreement."

Obviously these guidelines are ideal. My hope in sharing them with you is that you continue to seek God's best for yourself and your loved ones.

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P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920*

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