



DR. NADINE MACALUSO
licensed marriage & family therapist

Rules For a Fair Fight

1. Know what you're fighting about. Ask yourself and each other, "what is this argument really about?"
2. Stick to one subject only - keep the quarrel focused/specific. Arguments can veer off course and the root of the conflict gets lost.
3. Be direct - say how you feel, say what you need
4. Choose the time of your battles carefully (i.e., not 1AM or while you're in the middle of a restaurant)
5. Keep quarrels private
6. Don't read your partner's mind
7. Don't expect your partner to read your mind
8. Don't blame or shame
9. Own your own feelings - this means starting sentences with 'I feel', not 'you make me feel'
10. Don't talk each other down
11. Don't talk down to each other (i.e., don't be condescending...morally, intellectually or experientially)
12. Don't make sweeping over-generalizations ("you never" or "you always")
13. Don't hit below the belt
14. Don't be intentionally mean or cruel
15. Don't wear the belt too high (i.e., portraying yourself as weaker or more fragile than you are).
16. Don't bring up past fights and use them as ammunition for the present one
17. Actively listen (rather than waiting to speak)
18. No verbal abuse (i.e., name calling, screaming, threats, etc.)
19. Don't threaten to leave the relationship (divorce, break-up, move out, divide accounts, etc.)
20. No throwing objects or breaking things
21. No physical violence
22. Respect your partner's request to stop or "hit the pause button" - sometimes taking a break to de-escalate is a wise decision.

