

When You Fight - Learn To Fight Fair

By Cheri DeMoss

All couples fight from time to time. In healthy relationships there is a sense of fairness during and after the fight in order for the relationship to survive the rough times.

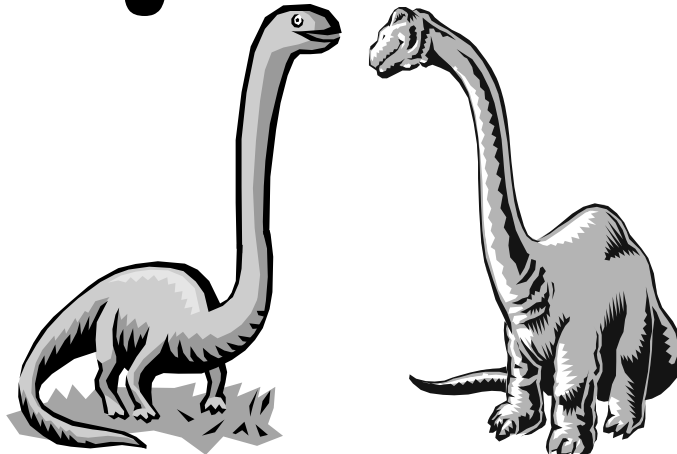
Fair fighting is when both partners **demonstrate a consistent willingness to understand** the other person's side & feelings, as well as they are able to understand their own.

Most of us grew up with the belief that fighting with someone means to emotionally batter the other person. To say or do most anything in order to give ourselves the feeling of not being "bad or wrong".

Fair fighting is a fair exchange—not one person being "right or feeling good" at the other person's expense. The goal is to reach a mutual understanding & connection.

Fair Fighting uses the following guidelines:

Really Listen. Let your partner explain their side & feelings, without interrupting them. Then let them know what you heard by paraphrasing it back to them. (What you're saying is....is that right?) Too often we hear what we expect to hear



Every couple fights from time to time. Learning to fight fair is the difference between a "good" fight and a "bad" fight. In a fair fight there are no emotional casualties only emotional connections

Want To End The Arguing But Not The Relationship?

No one teaches us how to have a relationship. Even when we're trying our best - we are guessing. We end up in relationships where we settle for less intimacy, closeness, & more arguing than we want.

Reactions towards & fear of our partner creates more & more distance. Both people usually feel that if their partner changed a few things the arguing would stop. When in reality they both need to understand

what's going on in the relationship & learn specific skills & behaviors that are relationship building instead of relationship destroying.

Our classes teach couples how to get understood; talk openly about reactions, patterns & fears; ask for what they want; listen without becoming afraid; and feel close again.

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and NOT what our partner is really saying.

Stop Fighting To Win.

When one person wins by proving the other person's feelings or position is wrong—both people loose. Intimacy and safety are shattered. **Trust, which is built by being understood & accepted, is destroyed.** Issues cannot be resolved unless BOTH partner's feelings are understood & accepted.

Most of us learned that fighting means to win by emotionally battering the other person.

Focus On One Issue At A Time. If you're the one talking, stay clear & focused on what you're upset about. If you're the one listening, try to understand the main issue your partner is upset about. It is both partner's responsibility to stay on topic. Gently reminding your partner when they start to drift to an additional issue or concern will help you both stay on track.

Avoid "Always", "Never" & "Should" Statements. They provoke defensiveness, powerlessness and

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How Do You Show Affection?

This guide is useful in helping you and your partner gain insight and gather information about your relationship. This check list will help highlight how you and your partner show each other affection, caring and love.

Read each question and decide how frequently you could answer "YES" for each one. Then write the number in the space provided. If a particular question doesn't apply, just skip it and go on to the next. There are no absolute scores - this is a tool to give you more information.

- 0 = Never
1 = Rarely
2 = Sometimes
3 = Often
4 = Almost Always
5 = Always

Feelings of Warmth:

- ___Do you feel a warm glow when you see or think about your partner?
___Do you have tender feelings when you are together?
___Do you miss your partner when you are apart?

Expressions of Affection:

- ___Do you use terms of endearment with your partner?
___Do you express affection in the tone of your voice?
___Do you show affection thru physical contact, touching, holding hands, etc?

Caring:

- ___Are you considerate of your partner?
___Do you try to show your partner that you care about them?
___Do you avoid saying or doing things that will hurt your partner?

Acceptance & Tolerance:

- ___Do you accept differences

of opinion taste and style?

- ___Do you accept your partner in totality, as someone with weak points as well as strong?
___Do you avoid being judgmental or punishing of your partner?

Empathy & Sensitivity:

- ___When your partner is feeling down, do you find you can share some of that feeling?
___Are you able to sense that your partner is feeling bad about something without being told?
___Are you able to determine & respect your partner's sensitive area?

Understanding:

- ___Do you feel you can understand why your partner may be upset?
___Can you see things thru your partner's eyes when you disagree?
___Can you tell what your partner is upset about when they complain?

Companionship:

- ___Do you enjoy doing exciting things with your partner?
___Do you like your partner's company when you're doing routine things?
___Do you enjoy just having your partner around when you're not doing anything particular?

Intimacy:

- ___Do you share your private thoughts and wishes?
___Do you feel free to tell your partner things you wouldn't tell anyone else?
___Do you like your partner to confide in you?

Friendliness:

- ___Do you feel an interest in your partner as a person?
___Do you like to know what your partner is thinking & feeling?
___Do you like to solicit your partner's opinions about your problems?

Pleasing:

- ___Do you think of things you 2

can do together?

- ___Do you try to make yourself more attractive?
___Do you say or do things to please your partner?

Support:

- ___Do you try to bolster your partner when they are discouraged?
___Do you try to help out when your partner is overwhelmed?
___Do you encourage your partner when they want to engage in a new venture?

- ___Do you feel emotionally close to your partner?
___Do you have a feeling of closeness to your partner when you are apart?
___Do you enjoy being physically close to your partner?

Score Guide:

- 145-180 = Always
109-144 = Almost Always
73-108 = Often
37-72 = Sometimes
1-36 = Rarely
0 = Never

Are You A Dirty Fighter?

Rate Yourself: Use this quiz as a guide; a way to get objective information about your behaviors.

- | | | |
|--|--------|-------|
| 1) Have you made your mind up before your partner has said a word? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 2) Spend you time thinking about what you're going to say without paying attention to what your partner is saying? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 3) Guess your partner's motive instead of listening for the reason? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 4) Change the focus by interrupting or distracting? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 5) Regard what your partner is saying as a deliberate threat to you? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 6) Attack the person instead of the position (You don't love me)? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 7) Drag in side issues (And besides no one really likes you)? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 8) Dredge up the past (You did the same thing last month)? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 9) Drag in 3rd party opinions (Well, your mother agrees with me)? | ___Yes | ___No |
| 10) Try to win the argument instead of reaching a mutual understanding? | ___Yes | ___No |

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counter attacks from your partner. Using these inaccurate words causes your partner to stop listening and start thinking of all the exceptions to what you are saying.

Use "I Feel" Statements. Instead of saying, "you never help me out." Say, "I'm upset when you didn't help me out today." By saying your FEELING about a BEHAVIOR and ending with another FEELING you help guard

Trust is built on being understood and accepted.

against inadvertently triggering your partner's defensiveness. Remember your partner is trying very hard to understand and accept what you're saying. You want to make it as easy as possible for them to hear you.

Be Present and Present Oriented. Look at your partner when they're talking. Give them your full, undivided attention. Don't read a magazine, clean the house or watch TV when they're sharing their feelings with you. Trust is built on being understood & accepted and is easily destroyed by not being present.

Don't Drag In Others or 2nd Opinions. Statements, such as, "Your mother thinks I'm right," or "You're just like your father," or even, "Our therapist

said you...." - do nothing to settle the issue at hand. These statements are only designed to help you win by making it seem that more people agree with you, so you must be right and your partner's feelings, and concerns are therefore wrong.

Don't Just Complain. After you've heard your partner & they feel listened to & understood suggest some reasonable options that might help make the situation better. The more options the better chance of you choosing an effective solution.

Empowering Options® specializes in teaching couples how to fight fair.
For Information Call:
773- 338-2889

Unresolved Issues

By Cheri DeMoss

Couples often will ask why their partner "always" brings up the past; issues, statements, comments, feelings that just don't go away.

The main reason we have unresolved issues is because we all have a basic human need to be heard & understood.

When our feelings & concerns are not given empathic attention & acceptance we can't let them go.

It's like cutting our hand & not taking care of the cut. It hurts, but we can still go about our day. It gets a little infected but we function well enough for months. The infection gets worst to where even the slightest bump doubles us over in pain.

Emotions are the same way.

Our partner hurts our feelings. We tell them. They don't hear how they have impacted us; instead they explain or deny. We still feel hurt but we can go about our day. Then the hurt builds & builds until the slightest reminder doubles us over in pain & we bring it up again...only with more energy, more resentment.

All couples hurt each other from time to time. It's part of being in a relationship. Once couples learn how to attend to the hurt they cause each other; learn how to put bactine & a band aid on the wound. The wound heals, no matter how much time has gone by. When our partner's feelings are heard & understood, without defensiveness, both past & current issues can be resolved.

About Cheri DeMoss - Empowering Options

Cheri DeMoss is Founder and Director of **EMPOWERING OPTIONS®**, an organization specializing in personal empowerment. For the past 17 years Cheri has been teaching others how to turn obstacles into options. Cheri's warm, innovative approach focuses on how learned shame and dysfunctional beliefs from childhood dictate our behaviors as adults. She creates a shame-free, completely supportive and positive environment where you can easily understand and explore the behavior patterns and ideas that no longer serve you.

In addition to working with individuals, groups and couples **EMPOWERING OPTIONS®** offers seminars, workshops, CD's, newsletters, and uniquely effective classes for couples. Cheri provides a safe, encouraging environment for clients to understand how these patterns shape our experiences in relationships, work situations, and our own self-esteem. She provides information, validation, and ideas that make it easier to create the changes you want.

Cheri maintains a private practice, as well as designs, produces and presents **EMPOWERING OPTIONS® Empower By Example** seminar series. Cheri also provides in-service training for school districts, and customizes workshops, classes & training seminars for mental health professionals and local communities. She provides consultation for a wide variety of businesses and presents at national and state conferences. Cheri and her associates conduct a full time private practice in Chicago.

The more information, the easier it is to see the options in our lives. Raising our esteem helps us feel safe in the world and reach our goals. For more information about relationships, parenting, new ideas, behaviors and options go to www.EmpoweringOptions.com

Signs Of A Healthy Relationship

By Cheri DeMoss

Those of us who have a healthy, intimate & fulfilling relationship know that it takes learnable skills to create and maintain it.

Since no one teaches us how to have a strong, healthy relationship; the first step is recognizing the difference between unhealthy and healthy behaviors. Below is a list of both types of behaviors to help you develop this skill.

Healthy Behaviors

Feelings Are Acknowledged & Expressed:

All expressions of feelings are encouraged, whether they are scary, negative, positive or loving. There is belief between the two people that feelings won't hurt them, but will make them closer.

Emotional Gentleness:

A gentle acceptance that we need to be able to talk things out in a safe and supportive manner in order to resolve the things that arise.

Having Fun With Others:

There is a comfort in being silly and playful with others & expressing our innate child-likeness.

Differences Are Accepted:

The more we accept our own differences the more automatically we accept others. We behave in a way that allows others to be right and to do things differently from the way we do things.

Direct & Open Communication:

By keeping things clear and direct we minimize any insecurity within the relationship. Even when we're angry we make a point of giving the message, "I love you even if I'm scared, angry or frustrated." We do not try to manipulate or provoke our partner. We put a strong priority on letting them know what we are reacting to and what we are feeling.

The Relationship Is Based on Freedom:

We let our partners do what they want to do. Our families tried to inhibit our freedom so we do it to our partner. Letting go of this need to force our partner to make us comfortable is replaced with us learning to do that for ourselves.

Unhealthy Behaviors

Feelings Are Denied:

The message that is given, directly or indirectly, is "Don't Have Feelings" Don't Talk About Feelings"...especially negative ones.

The Quick Fix:

Effort is put into making feelings go away NOW. The message given is make the uncomfortable stop at all costs.

Inability To Play:

Feeling uncomfortable and threatened by ours or others child-likeness. Joy and laughter are feared and pleasure, in most forms, is considered bad.

Rigid Attitudes:

We act as if there is only one right way to think, feel or behave—our way. And most of the time "Our Way" isn't even ours, but just a replication of our family's.

Doubles Messages & Unclear Communication:

We don't mean what we say or say what we mean. This behavior creates chaos, drama and insecurity. By giving double messages and unclear communication we keep things inconsistent and destroy the trust in our relationships.

Struggle For Control:

We criticize our partners for being different than us. We try to get them to be emotionally submissive by trying to control their behaviors. Our main focus is forcing them to make us emotionally comfortable instead of doing it for ourselves.

What Most Of Us Want

By Cheri DeMoss

The greatest gift we can give our partner is our complete attention.

Complete, un-distracted attention coupled with a genuine desire to let their feelings touch us.

When those we love & care about share with us they don't want advice, judgment, shame, blame or to be discounted.

They want their feelings, thoughts & concerns to be accepted. They want to be heard & understood without us reacting to them.

The experience of being truly heard & intimately known is the reason we want to have a relationship in the first place.

We need to remember that understanding our partner's feelings is as important as having them understand ours.

This emotional balance comes from learning how to stay objective, empathic & understanding. It is what most people recognize as feeling cared for.

When we give each other un-distracted attention we create the emotional safety needed so our relationship can remain healthy & grow.

More Information Call:
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