



THE EAP CONNECTION

5 RULES FOR A CLEAN FIGHT

In the heat of an argument, things can get ugly quite quickly, especially without ground rules for fighting fairly. Here are five rules to follow with your spouse or partner:

Keep it About the Issue

When a fight turns into attacks on your partner, you've crossed the line. In any fair fight, the conversation should focus on the issue at hand. Imagine you come home to a messy house and your partner lounging on the couch. An attack might look something like, "You're so lazy. You never clean the house." While a conversation focused on the issue might be, "I've had an exhausting day and would appreciate your help in cleaning the house. Would you take care of the dishes?" Using "I" statements can help reduce defensiveness and express your perspective without pointing the finger at your partner. It can also help prevent the disagreement from escalating.

Respect as the Foundation

At the core of your relationship, there should be a fundamental respect for your significant other. It's the belief that an individual should be treated as good and valuable. When you hold this belief, your actions should be centered on treating the other person well, even during a fight.

Take Time to Cool Off

If negative emotions overwhelm the conversation and things start going downhill fast, it's time to take a break. Nothing good usually comes from talking when emotions are running wild. Spend some time doing other things, such as a relaxation exercise or a walk, before coming back to the conversation.

Agree to Disagree

There are going to be times that you don't agree with your partner. We're all unique people with individual experiences, views, and ways of doing things. Learning to accept this fact and agreeing to disagree will benefit your relationship in the long run. There's no use arguing over things that can't be solved. Instead, look for opportunities to compromise with your partner and find common ground.

Genuine Interest in Your Partner's Point of View

One of the greatest skills in life, and especially in a marital relationship, is curiosity and interest in understanding and seeing things from another's point of view. When having a disagreement or fight, it's important to be open to actively listening to your partner's side of the story without planning your next rebuttal or attack. Allow for pauses between responses to create space for the other person to complete their thoughts. Show a genuine interest in what they have to say and ask questions to clarify their ideas. A good conversation involves taking turns to share your thoughts and validating each other.

Remember, in any relationship you're going to have disagreements, and sometimes, even fights. How you handle these situations can make a difference between a healthy or an unhealthy partnership. By laying down some ground rules for fighting, you and your partner can better navigate tough conversations.

If you are struggling with disagreements in a relationship, consider meeting with an EAP counselor at ERC to learn how to fight fairly. Marital / relationship issues are some of the top reasons why people access their EAP benefit.

HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

ERC: **Counselors & Consultants** is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For additional information, visit our website ERCincorp.com or call 1-800-222-8590.