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## **RULES FOR FAIR FIGHTING**

### **RULE #1: NO DEGRADING LANGUAGE**

Avoid name-calling, insults, put-downs or swearing.

### **RULE #2: NO BLAMING**

It is pointless to blame each other and it distracts from solving the problem at hand. It also invites your partner to be defensive and it escalates the conflict.

### **RULE #3: NO DEFENSIVENESS**

Avoid righteous indignation; innocent victimhood or counter attacks as a means of protecting yourself from criticism or attack by your partner.

### **RULE #4: NO YELLING OR SARCASM**

If it feels like yelling or sarcastic contempt to your partner, then it probably is. Make a conscious effort to lower your voice and speak respectfully.

### **RULE #5: NO USE OF FORCE**

Including pushing, shoving, grabbing, hitting, punching, slapping, restraining, throwing objects or damaging property. We all have a right to feel safe from all forms of abuse.

### **RULE #6: NO THREATS OF DIVORCE/LEAVING THE RELATIONSHIP**

Threatening to end the relationship in the heat of an argument is manipulative, hurtful and undermines trust and security.

### **RULE #7: USE "I" STATEMENTS VERSUS "YOU" STATEMENTS**

Describe how you feel, what you want, what you think, and what is important to you – not what your partner feels, wants or thinks (this is often a projection).

### **RULE #8: STAY IN THE PRESENT**

Keep your focus on what can be done today to resolve the issue at hand.

### **RULE # 9: KEEP TO THE TOPIC AT HAND**

Avoid bringing up past grievances or including a laundry list of complaints.

### **RULE #10: TAKE TURNS SPEAKING**

One person speaks at a time. The other REALLY listens – no tuning out, planning rebuttals, interrupting, or correcting the person speaking.

### **RULE #11: WHEN NECESSARY, USE TIME OUTS**

If you are in limbic hijack (your heart rate is above 95 bpm), you are not in a state of mind for problem solving. Respectfully time yourself out.

### **RULE #12: NO STONEWALLING**

If you time yourself out, you MUST reinitiate the conversation as soon as possible.

### **RULE #13: NO "OFFTHETABLEITIS"**

Do not take topics off the table just because you may find them to be uncomfortable.

