

Rules for Fair Discussions to Support Friendship

NOTE: Conflict is often healthy in a relationship IF it's not abusive. If abuse is present for one or both members of a dialogue, time-out for safety is the encouraged choice, and if there is a pattern to abusive behavior members are encouraged to seek professional support. This list is only intended to highlight some FAIR and UNFAIR behaviors – it's not exhaustive and can be added to as you see fit.

FAIR BEHAVIOR:

- Using 4 Horsemen Antidotes
- Allowing for Time-Outs/Breathers (Antidote to Flooding and/or STONEWALLING)
- Use "I" statements and Empathy (Antidote to CRITICISM)
- Admitting when you are wrong, accepting a piece of the misunderstanding (Antidote to DEFENSIVENESS)
- Sharing understanding by repeating & checking out meaning-making; Speaking one at a time and allowing equal time (Active Listening)
- Looking for compromises (Accepting Influence)
- Trying not to generalize (Omit "always" and "never")
- Observing rules you set (Ex: fighting in front of the kids or deciding what time is too late at night to have productive conflict)
- Showing personal respect (Integrity)
- Being honest with yourself and the other
- *All these behaviors support friendship (Antidote to CONTEMPT)

UNFAIR BEHAVIOR:

- The 4 Horsemen (Stonewalling, Criticism, Defensiveness, Contempt)
- Appearing to ignore the other (STONEWALLING)
- Blaming/finger-pointing/personal digs or attacks (CRITICISM)
- Righteous Indignation/Rigid self-protection (DEFENSIVENESS)
- Name-calling or swearing at someone
- Opening old wounds/dredging up the past
- Getting off on tangents (Detours)
- Intimidation/Threats of violence or abandonment (verbal/nonverbal)
- Changing the rules and not saying so (disobeying Time Out procedure)
- Expecting right/wrong, winner/loser outcomes
- Saving up resentments to dump all at once
- Mind-reading without checking out your assumptions
- Denying facts/disallowing different perspectives ("Gas-lighting")
- Using sex as leverage
- Gloating over a "victory"
- * All these behaviors support disrespect and possibly arrogant criticism/being "above" someone (CONTEMPT)