

Title: Relationship Rescue - Marriage Maintenance 1
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Thou shalt fight fair!

***The heart is the seat or centre of our relationships.**

Conflict is good, if handled correctly

How we handle conflict will determine if we will keep standing to the end.

Handling conflict correctly is a wonderful tool to bring healing and increase unity.

The win is to (1) reconcile, to break down the walls & **(2) get a gameplan** for the future, to avoid the same thing from happening over and over.

A study by (John Gottmann and Howard Markman): Reveals that neither money, sexual difficulty, or lack of communication necessarily account for divorce. Rather, One of the best predictors of couple's success in marriage is simply how they handle conflict.

How we handle **conflict is a matter of the heart** and **a matter of learning a few skills**.

Four harmful responses to conflict:

1. Peace at all costs (avoidance) - peacekeeper

Some deal with conflict, by never dealing with it at all. Some believe conflict is bad, and that no benefit arises through the struggle of trying to resolve the differences.

The danger is to stuff anger and build resentment. You need to deal with the issues.

2. Win / lose (defensiveness)

Harmful response to conflict is the tendency to view it as a win/lose situation. Such people usually approach any confrontation or disagreement as an attack, and therefore they assume a defensive posture. The major problem with this approach is that a person can't possibly hear one's partner, empathize with his or her needs, and meaningfully convey that one has heard the other when the person is engaged in frenetic self-defense.

3. You don't count (invalidation)

Invalidation defined (fighting for your marriage, Howard Markman) - *a pattern in which one partner subtly or directly puts down the thoughts, feelings, or character of the other.*

This is not just disagreeing with your partner, or not liking something he or she has done. It's a form of disregard, disrespect, and insensitivity. Statements such as "You're overreacting," "You don't feel that way," and "If you think that, then you are stupid" are all prime examples of invalidation.

4. All-Out war (Intensification)

A pattern of aggressive fighting, with increasing intensity that often leads to an out-of-control situation. Usually verbal in nature, the fighting is really just a yelling match in which the object of the "game" is to yell the l

oudest. The most damaging of all unhealthy fighting tactics. All-out war can include insults, criticism, name-calling, and physical violence. Cruel things are said and done that can never be taken back.

Five fair-fighting techniques

1. Dial down - time out!

You must calm down before you can expect to communicate with your partner. No one wants to discuss issues or differences when they are feeling attacked by you.

*Men need a minimum of 20 minutes to allow themselves to calm down (physiologically speaking).

2. Set the tone - gentle answer!

First few minutes of any interaction are critical and set the tone for the rest of the conversation. Approach your partner in a tender, gentle manner and this opens the door for reconciliation.

3. Shut up and listen - listen to understand

****Seek first to understand, then to be understood.**

*Guys remember: don't try and solve the issue! Just listen.

4. Use "I" statements

Once you have given your partner a chance to express the other side, and you have genuinely sought to understand your partner first, then it's your turn to communicate your perspective. In order to be effective here, **you must stick to "I" statements.**

Making "I" statements includes the ability to personalize, and own, your perspectives and feelings in such a way that the focus is on you, and not the other person.

5. Get a gameplan going

Some issues can be resolved by simply talking it out, without having to fix something or negotiate differences. Quite often, after both partners have had the opportunity to hear the other side in a respectful, mature fashion they can just drop the issue.

At other times the differences still present a problem that must be solved. For these times you need a gameplan, or very specific set of guidelines for working toward negotiation and compromise.

Four guidelines to getting to "a working gameplan":

1. **Identify the problem**
2. **List possible solutions.**
3. **Commit to try one or a combination of possible solutions.**
4. **Reevaluate your choice at a later time.**

**Content adapted from the 10 commandments of dating, by Ben Young & Dr Samuel Adams*