

## FAMILY FIGHT RULES

- 1. You Must Fight in Good Faith!** Your intention, desire, motivation is to clarify and resolve conflicts in such a manner that your relationship is enhanced, not damaged. Your ATTITUDE entering into conflict will determine WHAT you say and HOW you say it.
- 2. Don't Play Psychologist!** Allow your partner to THINK and FEEL for himself or herself. It is never appropriate to tell our "fight partner," "I know what you're thinking (or feeling) before you say it!" or "You don't mean what you just said, you REALLY mean..."
- 3. Don't Play Archeologist!** Leave the "dead bones" of dinosaurs where they belong—in the past. If you are going to renew your relationship or solve a crisis you must deal with today, here and now, and tomorrow. If you continually "badger" your partner with their "past" you are only asking for trouble and you may not really be interested in solving today's crisis.
- 4. Fight About ONLY One Issue at a Time!** Make a list, if necessary, but discuss, focus, fuss, etc., about ONLY one thing at a time and make sure it's the SAME one thing!
- 5. You Must Verbally Respond to the Other Person!** Pretending you didn't hear, ignoring your partner, and "pouting" are unacceptable conflict resolution skills. You can't fight without words.
- 6. No Name Calling or "Cheap Shots!"** "You're just like your mother, father, etc." is an emotional "zinger" that diverts the fuss from the problem onto emotionally sensitive points that only lead to defensiveness, anger, and distance from your partner. Partners know what "emotionally charged words" will hurt the other person the most; names, comparisons, obscenities, etc.—STOP INTENTIONAL HURT!
- 7. The Time and Place for a Fight Must Always Be Negotiable!** You must NOT expect the "fight" to happen HERE and NOW! That's a POWER PLAY! Issue the invitation for the "fight," discussion, etc., and then set the time and the place and "state the topic." THEN KEEP THE APPOINTMENT!
- 8. Know When to Stop Fighting!** When the "dead horse" has been beaten more than twice, STOP, and look for a solution. Stop the fighting when emotions are getting out of control. It's OK to have a "cooling off" period for a short time. Problems are never solved with the "Heart in control" instead of the "Head in control."
- 9. Fight About Facts or Opinions, But Not Both at the Same Time!** Opinions are opinions and should be allowed. We do not see the world in the same way! When fighting about FACTS, make sure you have ALL the facts and that they are ACCURATE. Don't generalize, fudge, or extend them to support your position.
- 10. Fight for an Agreement, Not an Argument!**