

Preventing Partner Violence

Working Towards Healthy Relationships Can Help

Partner violence – violent behavior occurring between two people involved in an intimate relationship – is about exercising power and control over another person. Healthy relationships, on the other hand, are built on equality, mutual respect, effective communication and a willingness to compromise on both sides.

Partners Should Be Equals

Partners in a relationship, whether dating, living together or married, should be equals. Here are some guidelines for an equal relationship:

- Work at negotiating win/win agreements.
- Be conscious of competition and power plays.
- Be equal in sexual responsibility. Talk openly about each other's needs.
- Spend time with friends. Let your partner do the same.
- Be honest with your partner.
- Don't demand or expect perfection from yourself or your partner.
- Learn to deal with your insecurities and fears. Control those feelings— not other people.

Rules for a Fair Argument

Conflict is a normal part of every relationship. But, if it's not handled properly, conflict can tear

a relationship – and lives – apart. We can't avoid conflicts, but we can learn to fight fair. The key is to attack the problem not the other person. Take a look at the following lists of fair and unfair behaviors. Ask yourself: Do I play fair even in the heat of an argument?

Fair Behaviors

- Focusing on the problem.
- Attacking the problem, not the person, with an open mind.
- Looking for compromises.
- Taking time-outs and breathers.
- Being honest with yourself and your partner.
- Treating a person's feelings with respect.
- Admitting when you're wrong.

Partners in a relationship, whether dating, living together or married should be equals.

- Making your agreements clear – repeating them and writing them down.

Foul Behaviors

- Name calling
- Bringing up the past
- Hitting or pushing
- Threatening
- Expecting there to be a winner and a loser
- Denying the facts
- Making excuses
- Gloating over a "victory"
- Ignoring your partner
- Getting even

An Ounce of Prevention

In order to end partner violence we must focus on education and prevention. Learning how to function as equals and how to fight fair will provide the foundation for healthy and life-enhancing relationships. If your relationship is a healthy one; keep it healthy. If you occasionally engage in some of the unfair behaviors, now is the time to change. If you are in an abusive relationship, get help today.

Arguing is part of every relationship. But effective and fair arguing can keep a healthy relationship from turning into an unhealthy one.
