

How To Pick Up the Gloves In Marriage and Fight Well - "Body Basics!"

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Call it a fight, call it a discussion, call it whatever you want. But let's be honest. The truth is that in every marriage there is fighting. No matter what you think, there is no such thing as the Cleavers or the Cosbys. That being said, if it happens in every marriage, why is it that there are some couples who seem to enter and exit the ring gracefully while others seem like there is never a break between rounds? The reason is that some people have learned the secrets behind fighting well and others are just swinging away hoping to connect.

Whether you have been married 20 years or 20 minutes, learning to fight well can be the difference between being one of the most rewarding experiences of marriage and the most challenging.

What fight do you want to fight?

Let's clarify what was said previously. Everyone fights, but you may not actually know it. Even if you are in the relationship. There are basically 2 types of fighters; the Screamers and the Sweepers.

What does a screamer sound like?

This is the couple that nobody doubts is having problems. They are the ones that fight over the smallest things, and these small things turn into World War III. The fights turn brutal fast and leave deep wounds that are still raw as the next fight starts. They fight about the same thing over and over and never seem to solve a thing.

How deep is the carpet you sweep under?

These couples do have conflicts, but they keep it quiet. From the neighbors, from the family, and even from themselves. When a conflict arises, these people will quickly and effectively avoid the conflict and will work around it. When they come into therapy, generally these people will talk about conflicts that were never resolved 10 years ago that their partner didn't even know was a problem.

Why do so many couples fight?

Here is the problem. There really are 3 things working against you in this relationship.

First is that neither one of you grew up in the same family. Maybe your family was the kind of family that was loud and outgoing, always doing things together, and constantly moving, whereas your partner came from a family where spending time together meant that they were in the same room together listening to the same clock ticking in the corner. It may not have been quite that extreme, but you get the point.

Secondly, no two people in the world have had exactly the same experiences and thoughts as another person. Our experiences tend to form who we are and how we see life. Therefore, no two people in or out of a relationship will ever see their relationship exactly the same. It is like trying to compare apples to oranges.

Finally, there is one overlying theme that hangs over all of us in traditional relationships. One of us is male and the other is female. Period. Although we are not from different planets as you may have heard, society expects different things from us and we therefore have different goals and expectations about relationships and our roles in them.

Knowing that there are such strong, lifelong habits and traits that we are dealing with, it should be pretty obvious that every once in a while you are going to get into a bit of an argument!

Why do we lose control?

When we fight, something interesting happens in our bodies. For most people, fighting isn't just an exchange of words. It is an emotional event that happens and is felt throughout our bodies.

Emotion types

There are two types of emotions. Primary and secondary. Secondary emotions are emotions that come after the main emotion occurs. In essence, it is a reaction to the reaction.

When people come into a session, most often we hear "She pissed me off", or "He made me so mad". That is not the real emotion. That is the reaction to the emotion. The primary emotion is hurt,

disappointment, or rejection. It is important that this distinction be made.

Chemical Confusion

Part of the problem when we fight is that too often we are dealing with the secondary emotions. We have felt something strongly like rejection or betrayal, and then our bodies automatically go into defensive mode. Our brains release chemicals that put us on alert and do not allow proper functioning of brain processing.

What we need to realize is that people who work off of secondary emotions do not actually see reality because their brains cannot function properly with the chemicals that are being produced. Our natural response is to retaliate without thought. How can you fight effectively when your brain is not functioning? You can't! That is why you need to be able to see clearly enough to fight.

This is just not natural!

Why is it that fighting well is so difficult? Even the most practiced couple makes mistakes at times and seems to go backwards. What needs to be understood is that it is not natural to have the kind of conversations that will make marriages work. Our natural reaction is to fight or run.

So what we are doing is trying go against what our animal instincts are telling us to do. What needs to happen is that we need to transcend that instinct and move to a higher level and do things that feel difficult and unnatural. It's hard, but it can be done using proven tools.