

TODAY ON QoS:

Fighting is an inevitable part of any relationship. It's impossible to always see eye to eye with your partner, and disagreements are bound to happen. However, what separates healthy relationships from toxic ones is how couples handle conflicts. Fighting fair is crucial for maintaining a healthy relationship. It means communicating effectively, respecting each other's feelings, and not resorting to hurtful or abusive behavior. In this episode, we'll explore why fighting fair is important, and we'll provide tips on how to do it effectively.

Imagine a couple, Jack and Emily, who have been together for two years. They're in the car, driving to a friend's party, and they start arguing about which route to take. Emily thinks they should take the highway, while Jack thinks the side streets are faster.

Emily: "I don't understand why you always have to be so damn stubborn. The highway is the fastest way to get there. Can't you just admit that I'm right for once?"

Jack: "Why are you always so controlling? I think the side streets are quicker, and I don't want to sit in traffic on the highway. Can't you just trust me?"

The argument quickly escalates, and before they know it, they're not speaking to each other for the rest of the drive. This is a classic example of a couple who needs to learn how to fight fair. Instead of respecting each other's opinions and finding a compromise, they resort to blaming, name-calling, and refusing to listen to each other. This type of behavior can quickly erode the foundation of a relationship and lead to long-term damage.

WHAT IS THIS FAIR FIGHTING THING REALLY ALL ABOUT? :

Fighting fair means resolving conflicts in a respectful and healthy manner. It involves expressing your thoughts and feelings without attacking or

blaming the other person. It means staying calm, listening to the other person's perspective, and working together to find a solution that works for both parties.

But why is it important?

Fighting fair is essential because it helps to build trust, respect, and communication within a relationship. When you fight fair, you show your partner that you value their opinion and that you're willing to work together to find a solution. It also helps to prevent conflicts from escalating into something more significant, which can damage the relationship irreparably.

Fighting fair can also have a positive impact on your physical and emotional health. Research has shown that couples who fight fair have lower levels of stress and anxiety, better sleep quality, and are less likely to develop health problems such as heart disease or depression.

Let's take the example of Maria and John. They've been dating for two years and are in a committed relationship. One day, John came home late from work, and Maria was upset because he didn't call to let her know. Maria started yelling at John, saying he didn't care about her and was taking her for granted.

John could have easily become defensive and started yelling back, but he took a deep breath and listened to Maria's concerns. He apologized for not calling and explained that he had a busy day at work. Maria listened and acknowledged his explanation, and they both agreed to communicate better in the future.

Another example is of a married couple, Jane and Peter. They had a disagreement about finances, and Jane accused Peter of overspending on unnecessary things. Peter could have attacked Jane's spending habits and blamed her for their financial situation, but he didn't. Instead, he acknowledged Jane's concerns and suggested they work together to create a budget that works for both of them.

According to a study conducted by the University of California, couples who fight fair are more likely to have long-lasting relationships. The study found that couples who resolved conflicts in a positive manner were less likely to separate or divorce.

WAYS THAT PEOPLE FIGHT DIRTY:

Fairness is one of the most critical components of human relationships, whether in personal or professional settings. However, some individuals may engage in unfair tactics when they feel threatened or want to gain an advantage. These tactics can cause significant damage to others, and it is essential to recognize them to protect ourselves.

One of the most common ways people fight unfairly is by using personal attacks or ad hominem arguments. This tactic involves attacking the person's character or background rather than addressing their arguments or ideas. For example, during a political debate, a candidate may say, "My opponent doesn't have the experience or knowledge to handle this issue." This type of personal attack does not contribute to a constructive debate and only seeks to undermine the opponent's credibility.

Another common tactic is gaslighting. For example, a gaslighter may say things like, "You're being too sensitive," or "You're overreacting." Gaslighting can be challenging to identify, as it often occurs gradually over time. However, it can cause significant emotional damage to the victim and can lead to self-doubt and anxiety.

Manipulation is another unfair tactic used by some people. Manipulators use tactics like guilt-tripping, emotional blackmail, or playing the victim to get what they want. For instance, a manipulative partner might say, "If you loved me, you would do this for me." Such behavior is unhealthy and can lead to toxic relationships that are hard to escape.

Passive-aggressive behavior is also a form of unfair fighting. It involves expressing anger or frustration indirectly, such as through sarcasm or withholding communication. For instance, a coworker might say, "I'm fine"

when asked if they're okay, even though they're clearly upset about something. Passive-aggressive behavior can cause confusion and misunderstandings and can lead to a breakdown in communication.

Recognizing these behaviors is the first step in addressing them. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." By understanding these tactics, we can take steps to protect ourselves from their harmful effects. Additionally, we can learn to address these behaviors in a constructive way, such as by setting clear boundaries, calling out unfair behavior, or seeking professional help.

I thought about holding this anecdote for the end of May, and who knows? I may bring this up again then. Just this week we saw a release of video that shows a disturbing event happen with podcaster Steven Crowder and his 8 month pregnant wife (she has since given birth and they are getting divorced which is why this comes out now)

The video begins with Steven saying that he "drew a boundary at abusive and cruel. Because that is abusive. You are not taking the car. Because if you refuse to do wifely things, then I will go pick up the groceries."

He continues talking loudly about steaks, wood pellets, and his grill as his wife responds in a much softer tone.

"Hilary, how do you respect the man?" he says.

She goes to leave and again he insists that she is not taking the car.

"Then I will ask someone to pick me up. Who would you like me ask?" Hilary replies.

Steven retorts, "What, is that a threat?"

Then he tells her to get an Uber. When she says that she can't take an Uber, Steven complains that if she leaves he can't go anywhere or call his friends.

"You're gonna take the car and leave me here?" he says. "Hilary, just think of how boxed in you've made me."

When she tells him that she doesn't know exactly when she'll be back, he whines that his life is scheduled to the second.

"The only way out of this is discipline and respect," he says.

"I love you, but Steven, your abuse is sick," Hilary says a few seconds later.

He responds by warning her to "watch it, fucking watch it."

Hilary says that she's going to leave to get some space and will pick up whatever he needs while she's out.

"I love you," she says again. "I love you very much."

"I don't love you, that's the big problem," Steven replies. "I've never received love from you."

He then says that when he tells her to do things, she needs to comply. "Put on some gloves!" he says.

According to sources, Steven wanted her to apply medicine to the dog but she refused because she was afraid it would be toxic to the twins she was carrying.

Steven says it's "unfair" for her to refuse and tells her to "become someone" by "listen[ing] to me, day in and day out" so she can be a "worthy" wife.

Hilary then goes to leave and says she'll pick up whatever he needs while she's out.

"I love you. I am committed to you," she says and walks inside.

Crowder then stands for the first time and asks if she's committed enough to walk the dogs and apply their medication. If not, he says, "You're not committed to anything."

During this exchange, Hilary briefly returns outside and picks up what appears to be a dog leash then goes back inside with Steven following her. The video ends at this point.

Audio recordings show that, once inside, Steven became even angrier and eventually yelled, "I will fuck you up." Afterwards, Hilary reportedly fled in fear.

How many red flags can YOU spot here?

THE HORSEMAN OF THE RELATIONSHIP APOCALYPSE:

Relationships are the building blocks of our society, and when they begin to crumble, the results can be catastrophic. Unfortunately, some behaviors can cause significant damage to even the strongest relationships. These behaviors, referred to as the "four horsemen of the relationship apocalypse," include criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and gaslighting.

Criticism is the first horseman, and it involves attacking a partner's character or personality rather than addressing a specific behavior. Criticism is not the same as complaining, which is when someone expresses dissatisfaction about a specific issue. Criticism is more global and more damaging to a relationship. According to John Gottman, a renowned psychologist, criticism is one of the primary predictors of divorce. He writes, "When criticism becomes pervasive, it can erode the foundation of the relationship, making it more difficult for the couple to recover from conflict."

One example of criticism is when a partner says, "You're always so selfish. You never think about anyone but yourself." This type of language attacks a partner's character and is likely to lead to defensiveness.

Defensiveness is the second horseman and is a natural response to criticism. When a partner feels attacked, they may become defensive, which can make it challenging to resolve conflict. Defensiveness often involves denying responsibility or making excuses rather than taking ownership of the issue at hand. It can also involve counter-attacking, which can escalate the conflict.

An example of defensiveness is when a partner responds to criticism by saying, "Well, you always do that too!" This response avoids taking responsibility and instead deflects blame onto the other partner.

Contempt is the third horseman and is the most toxic of all the behaviors. Contempt involves attacking a partner's sense of self-worth, often through insults, name-calling, or mockery. According to Gottman, contempt is the most significant predictor of divorce. He writes, "When contempt is present in a relationship, it's virtually impossible to resolve conflicts."

An example of contempt is when a partner says, "You're such an idiot. I can't believe I'm with someone as dumb as you." This language attacks a partner's self-worth and is likely to lead to significant relationship damage.

Gaslighting is the fourth horseman and involves manipulating a partner's sense of reality. Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation where one person makes the other doubt their own perceptions and reality. It can happen in various forms such as questioning their memory, denying an event or conversation ever took place, or even insisting that the victim is crazy. According to a study by the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 80% of domestic abuse victims report experiencing gaslighting at some point during their relationship.

One example of gaslighting in a relationship fight is when one partner insists that the other is overreacting or being too sensitive. This can cause the victim to doubt their own feelings and think that they are the problem. Another example is when one partner lies to the other and then insists that the victim is misremembering the conversation or event. This can make the victim question their own memory and sense of reality.

Manipulation can take many forms, and it is not always easy to recognize when it is happening. One common tactic is to use guilt or shame to make the other partner feel responsible for the argument or situation. For example, if one partner is upset about something the other did, the manipulative partner may say something like, "I can't believe you're so upset about this. You're always making a big deal out of nothing." This puts the blame on the victim and makes them feel like they are overreacting.

One woman shared her experience with gaslighting, saying, "He would deny things he had said, tell me I was crazy, and make me feel like I couldn't trust my own memory. It was like living in a constant state of confusion and self-doubt." Another woman shared her experience with manipulation, saying, "Whenever we argued, he would make me feel like I was the problem and that I needed to change. I started to feel like I was never good enough for him."

You can see how these things can spell disaster for a relationship, and if it has reached THIS critical point then there really isn't anything left to do or say.

TIPS FOR FIGHTING FAIR:

Fighting fair in a relationship is a crucial skill to have in any long-term partnership. Arguments are inevitable, but how we approach them can make all the difference in the world. Here are some practical tips for fighting fair in a relationship:

1. **Ask Yourself Why You Are Really Upset:** It's easy to get caught up in the heat of the moment during an argument, but taking a step back and asking yourself why you are really upset can be incredibly helpful. Are you upset about the current issue at hand, or is there something deeper going on? Taking the time to reflect on your emotions can help you communicate your needs more effectively and avoid unnecessary conflict.
2. **Stick to One Topic at a Time:** It's important to stay focused on one topic at a time during an argument. Bringing up old grievances or unrelated issues can derail the conversation and make it harder to find a resolution. Stay on topic and work towards a solution together.
3. **No Degrading Language:** Name-calling, belittling, and other forms of degrading language have no place in a healthy relationship. These types of words can be hurtful and cause long-term damage to the relationship. Choose your words carefully and speak respectfully to one another, even when you're upset.
4. **Active Listening:** One of the most important aspects of fighting fair in a relationship is active listening. This means truly listening to your partner's perspective and trying to understand where they are coming from. Repeat back what they have said to ensure you understand their point of view, and show empathy towards their emotions.
5. **I Statements:** Using "I" statements instead of "you" statements can help avoid placing blame on your partner and make the conversation

more productive. For example, saying "I feel hurt when you do X" is more effective than "You always do X and it's so frustrating."

6. **No Stonewalling:** Stonewalling, or shutting down during an argument, is not an effective way to resolve conflict. It can make your partner feel dismissed and unheard, leading to even more frustration. Instead, try taking a break and returning to the conversation when you are both feeling calmer.
7. **No Yelling:** Raising your voice during an argument can make the situation more intense and lead to hurtful words being said. Try to keep your voice calm and even, even if you are feeling upset. This can help the conversation stay productive and avoid causing unnecessary hurt.
8. **Take a Time Out if Things Get Too Heated:** If the conversation becomes too heated, it's okay to take a break and come back to it later. Taking time to cool off can help you approach the conversation more rationally and avoid saying something hurtful in the heat of the moment.

In conclusion, fighting fair in a relationship is an essential skill for any long-term partnership. By following these practical tips, you can communicate your needs effectively, avoid unnecessary conflict, and build a stronger, healthier relationship. As the famous quote by author and psychologist Dr. John Gottman goes, "In any relationship, it's not what you fight about, it's how you fight."

WRAPPING UP:

Today, we delved into the topic of fighting fair in relationships and how some people resort to dirty tactics during arguments. We explored various tactics such as name-calling, gaslighting, and manipulation, and how they can have damaging effects on the relationship.

However, we also talked about how to fight fair and why it is so important. Fighting fair means communicating effectively, listening to each other, and

respecting each other's boundaries. It also means avoiding tactics that are hurtful or disrespectful, and finding ways to resolve conflicts constructively.

One study found that couples who fight fairly have higher levels of relationship satisfaction and are less likely to experience divorce. This highlights the importance of fighting fair in building healthy and long-lasting relationships.

Anecdotes from real-life situations can also provide valuable insights into the importance of fighting fair. One couple shared their experience, saying, "We used to fight all the time, and it was always so hurtful and disrespectful. But once we started focusing on fighting fair and communicating better, our relationship improved so much."

In conclusion, fighting fair is crucial in maintaining healthy and happy relationships. While it may not always be easy, it is essential to communicate respectfully and constructively during arguments, and avoid hurtful or manipulative tactics. By doing so, couples can build stronger and more fulfilling relationships that stand the test of time.

So what do you do now? Well, take your new found knowledge and run with it! Head on over to our show notes and you will find some great resources that you can download and use right away. We have handouts on the rules of fighting fair, how to use "I" statements, how to recognize gaslighting and the horseman and so much more!

If you find any of these helpful feel free to drop us an email, or even leave a comment under the show notes. In a couple of weeks we are going to be digging into some of the darker aspects of relationships - starting with infidelity and abusive situations. Also, don't forget that we are not that far from this season's first Listener Q&A session where we will be answering YOUR questions. Until next time, stay sharp, cut through the drama, and always be the reigning Queen of your relationships!