

these "Six Rules of a Fair Fight" the next time you find yourself involved in an argument or conflict situation:

Rule #1

Don't blame or accuse by constantly saying "You": "You don't. . . ."; "You won't. . . ."; "You are. . . ." Instead, use "I" or even "we" messages: "I wish"; "I feel"; "I'd like"; "We might."

Rule #2

If at all possible, don't argue about personal or private matters in public. It's embarrassing. It's nobody else's business. And it blocks effective communication.

Rule #3

Don't ask someone a question unless you honestly want their answer. On the other hand asking questions you really want answers to can lead to all sorts of new insights about someone.

Rule #4

Don't stock up on bits and pieces of "ammunition" until you can't stand it any longer and the war starts! If someone says or does something that bothers you, talk it over at the time. Or at least as soon afterward as possible. As St. Paul advises:

*Even if you are angry, you must not sin:
never let the sun set on your anger. . . .
Never have grudges against others. . . .—Ephesians 4:26, 31*

Storing up gripes and grudges and then waiting for the proper moment in a fight to dump all the ancient garbage out on someone's head is unfair.

Rule #5

Don't use "lethal" weapons or "psychological warfare." Waiting for an opening and then "going for the throat" by attacking the other person's sore spots or vulnerable points, such as their "manhood" or "womanhood," reputation, looks, and so on, just isn't fighting fairly. Therefore, we might ponder these words of Paul to the Ephesians:

Never . . . lose your temper or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each

other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.—Ephesians 4:31-32

Trying to get or keep the "upper hand" by breaking down in tears, or walking out, or pouting, or giving someone the "silent treatment" is also "fighting dirty." It attempts to use the other by playing on their genuine emotions and feelings for you in order to get your own way. But look out, if you're found out!

Rule #6

When you argue in a relationship, the only possible winner is both of you. If either of you loses, then you both lose. This is especially true of personal relationship disagreements, but also of business and even casual relationships as well. The point of discussing with someone, therefore, should never be "How can I have my way?" but, rather, "How can we work things out together for the benefit of both or all of us?"