



Skill 40: Mediation and Negotiation

Activity A: Ground Rules for Fighting Fair

Worksheet

Fair Fighting: Ground Rules for Negotiation

1. Remain calm. Try not to overreact to difficult situations. By remaining calm it will be more likely that others will consider your viewpoint.
2. Express feelings in words, not actions. Telling someone directly and honestly how you feel can be a very powerful form of communication. If you start to feel so angry or upset that you feel you may lose control, take a "time out" and do something to help yourself feel steadier - take a walk, do some deep breathing, pet the cat, play with the dog, do the dishes - whatever works for you.
3. Be specific about what is bothering you. Vague complaints are hard to work on.
4. Deal with only one issue at a time. Don't introduce other topics until each is fully discussed. This avoids the "kitchen sink" effect where people throw in all their complaints while not allowing anything to be resolved.
5. No "hitting below the belt." Attacking areas of personal sensitivity creates an atmosphere of distrust, anger, and vulnerability.
6. Avoid accusations. Accusations will cause others to defend themselves. Instead, talk about how someone's actions made you feel.
7. Don't generalize. Avoid words like "never" or "always." Such generalizations are usually inaccurate and will heighten tensions.
8. Avoid "make believe." Exaggerating or inventing a complaint - or your feelings about it - will prevent the real issues from surfacing. Stick with the facts and your honest feelings.
9. Don't stockpile. Storing up lots of grievances and hurt feelings over time is counterproductive. It's almost impossible to deal with numerous old problems for which interpretations may differ. Try to deal with problems as they arise.
10. Avoid clamming up. When one person becomes silent and stops responding to the other, frustration and anger can result. Positive results can only be attained with two-way communication.