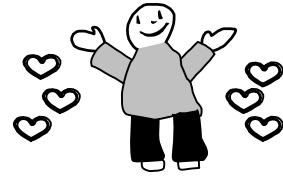


FAIR ARGUING RULES



1. Be respectful with one another.
2. Stay at least three feet from each other.
3. Never touch each other in anger.
4. Talk about the here and now. Focus on one issue at a time.
5. Use the past only as an historical reference. Leave past problems in the past. Use what you've learned from the past to help you now and in the future.
6. No reading the other person's mind. Instead, try asking them what they are thinking.
7. All subjects are okay.
8. Use "I" statements. Take responsibility for your own thoughts and feelings. Tell the other parent how you feel. Remember to say "I am" in front of the feeling. (i.e. "I'm frustrated that we can't talk like adults to each other.")
9. No screaming, yelling, name-calling.
10. No put downs or swearing.
11. No cutting the other person off. No interruptions.
12. Don't just be against. Don't just complain. *Offer solutions!*



To make certain the argument doesn't get out of hand:

- Set a time limit for discussions.
- Identify your early warning signs of anger. If you are enraged, take a time out.
- Leave the scene and the person until you cool down; at least five or ten minutes.
- Don't drink.
- Do relaxation techniques, take some deep breaths.
- Divert activity and thinking.
- Visit a friend who can help you stay calm.
- Use positive self-talk: "I'll be okay."

How Parents Can Cooperate and Fair Arguing Rules
are compiled from *Parenting After Divorce* by Philip M. Stahl, Ph.D.