

How to Avoid Classic Marital Fights

The well-known adage for family gatherings goes something like this: “Never talk about politics, sex or religion.” That’s any family—modern family, traditional family, non-traditional family, you name it.

That well may be a practical suggestion for large get-togethers at Thanksgiving and Christmas, but it’s not the best advice for your marriage. Avoiding difficult topics doesn’t make the tension go away. To the contrary, unwillingness to communicate mostly serves to deepen the divide. Can you spell marriage conflict?

Here at All Pro Dad, we recommend a marriage that values communication and acknowledges the potential for conflict in the context of mutual respect and affirming love.

Simply put, we’d better talk about the things we fight about. If we won’t talk, then fighting is all that’s left in the way of communication. Parenting 101 and Marriage 101 are often, fundamentally, exactly the same class.

1. Money. Sit down together and work out a budget. Agree to take a look at expenses every month. If the meeting is pre-arranged and you both come to the table with 100 percent transparency, then the conversation about money can move from the emotional into the practical.

2. Family communication. “You never talk!” “You never listen!” Well, it’s easy to be distracted, so try this:

- No TV during meals.
- Dedicate 30 minutes every evening to “conversation with coffee” (or the beverage of your choice).
- Go through a book such as *201 Great Questions*, and

actually schedule time for a tête-à-tête every day.

3. Children. Of course you fight about the children! Recognize the fact that tensions run high because you love them so much. Then turn conflict into communication by saying, “I need your help figuring out how to deal with this,” at the start of “those” conversations.

4. Intimacy. Intimacy? Who has time for that? Consider this, busy parents. You schedule everything else that’s important—the things that you believe you shouldn’t miss. Isn’t this part of your relationship worth a little planning? Call it “planned spontaneity” if you like. Here’s an important truth: Planning doesn’t kill spontaneity. It simply gives your creative impulse room to find its voice.

5. Time. You know the old Rolling Stones old tune, “Time Is on My Side”? Well, it’s wrong. Time is typically the thief of family harmony. Couples fight all the time for a stake in how the 24 hours are divvied up. Instead of fighting, join forces: “Okay, here’s the day/week/vacation. Let’s figure out how to make it work for us.” Make it a partnership against the conspiracy of time—the common foe.

6. Priorities. Are they “my priorities,” “her priorities” or “our priorities,” and who has power of veto? First things first: Power in the marriage relationship equation is gained only by giving it away. It’s important to remember that the first priority is always love—that love gives itself away and that “love does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking” (Paul, circa A.D. 70).

7. Jealousy. Jealousy is best defined as “resentment against a rival.” In marriage, everything can be a potential rival: the children, possessions, friends, work, colleagues, church commitments. The perception of rivalry is as powerful as the reality of it and, as such, should never be discounted. So, All Pro Dads, make it your business to communicate what is

true to your wife! You can't overdo this one, but you can undo your marriage if you take her for granted.

8. Religion. Some couples fight based on denominational preference; some fight over the fundamentals of faith; some fight regarding levels of commitment; and some fight about religion because one of them is interested and the other is not. Regardless of the fight, try to live your faith with authenticity, integrity and humility. The closer you are to God, then the closer (no matter where your spouse stands) you are to your mate. The key point here is *your* faithfulness, not theirs.

9. Politics. Question: Do we have to talk about politics? Answer: Believe me, we do!

OK, so why do you fight? Is it because your spouse is wrong? Your spouse would surely come around to your way of thinking if you just repeated your talk-radio sound bite one more time, right? Or maybe the fight comes in response to the fact that you fail to value her opinion or she refuses to respect yours?

Again, the important thing here is to cultivate an atmosphere in which you can talk about anything, because your spouse knows you love and respect them regardless of disagreement. Browbeating your spouse into thinking in lock-step will not ever bring peace or joy to your household. Don't just agree to differ. Learn to understand your wife's opinion—you might just learn something.

10. The past. Here's a good rule of thumb: Never argue historically. But we do. We bring up the past and we hold it over one another's heads. Here's a good question to ask yourself if you're tempted to throw something in your wife's face that she can't do a thing about today: "So what?" You are not that same person anymore—and neither is she. The past is past. Let it stay there. Move on.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a by-product, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **Instagram**.