

The Same Old Marriage Fights and How to Change

My wife, Susan, and I have been married 24 years. After so many years, you'd think we would have smooth sailing in our relationship all the time, right? Well, not really. We are two imperfect people who do not live a perfect life. We still argue. And more often than not, it's usually about the same two or three things.

Here are some of our most common fights:

- At times, Susan will say, "You *always* criticize me," or, "You *never* encourage me." It really makes me angry when Susan exaggerates with words like *always* and *never*.
- Instead of addressing an issue directly with one of our kids, I'll often say things to Susan like, "They shouldn't talk to each other like that," or, "They need to finish their project." And then I'll ask her to handle it. That frustrates Susan a lot.
- I want Susan to be more physically affectionate with me. She's not as fired up about that as I am. Tension and arguments occur.

So, what can be done about the same old marriage fights? Here are some simple steps to break the cycle:

1. Identify the root cause of the problem. Is your wife mad that you were 10 minutes late getting home from work? Or is she really upset because she thinks your work is more important to you than she is? Be sure to identify what's really bothering her, and work to get to the bottom of the problem.

2. Listen to your spouse. Sometimes a fight can be prevented by just listening to your spouse. Ask your spouse questions, and then just listen. This will show her that you truly care.

3. Empathize with your spouse. It is so important to put yourself in your spouse's shoes in order to understand them better. Feel what they feel so you can truly understand their side of the conflict, not just your own.

4. Discuss what you can change. Once you're done listening and empathizing, be sure to ask your spouse how you can change to avoid the argument in the future.

5. Take action, and take it seriously. The fight may be over, but that only means it's time to put what you've learned into action. Make a serious effort to follow through with changes you discussed together. One way to do this is to ask your spouse on a weekly basis, "How am I doing on this?"

What are some of your most common fights with your spouse, and what are you doing to change that pattern? Please share your thoughts below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)