

20. **Play the Martyr**- if timed properly, this tactic can completely disorient the opposition. “You’re right, dear, I am hopeless,” can stop them in their tracks. An example of a less subtle form is “how can you say that after all I’ve done for you.” An extreme form is to threaten to kill yourself if they don’t shape up.

21. **Use Money** - “If you made as much money as _____,” or, “When you make as much as I do, then you can have an opinion,” are old favorites.

22. **Use Children** - “If you spent more time with them, they wouldn’t be failing,” “Do you want them to grow up like you?”

23. **Use Relatives** - “You are just like you mother” or “At least my family communicates” can break their concentration and undermine confidence.

24. **Frequently and Readily Give Advice** - By telling people how they should act, think, and feel, you can maintain a position of superiority while insisting you are only trying to be helpful.

25. **Get Even** - don’t settle for a compromise or an apology. Hold grudges for as long as possible as you might need those complaints in future arguments.

26. **Use Terminal Language** - For example, if you happen to be upset by the fact that the room wasn’t straightened, start with, “You are such a slob,” to suggest that it is their existence and not their behavior at question.

27. **Be Inconsistent** - Keep them off balance by changing your position. Try complaining that they never talk to you and then ignore them when they do.

28. **Others** - this list should only be considered suggestive of the range of tactics to be drawn from. With practice and creativity, participants should be able to come up with numerous innovations.

FBC Recommended Action Point: Circle **three** you’d like the Lord to help you remove from your personal repertoire over the next three – six months. Begin praying about it and taking steps of obedience as He shows them to you. See especially Ephesians 4:17-30 and Colossians 3:1-17.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Resolving Everyday Conflict (by Ken Sande) Easy reading and the most solid biblical teaching you can get on resolving conflict in a God-honoring way.

A Lasting Promise (by Scott Stanley, et al) This book effectively teaches how to avoid making disagreements into open war.



fbcva.org • 540.662.7743 • fbc@fbcva.org
3217 MIDDLE RD, WINCHESTER, VA 22602

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MARRIAGE MATTERS POINTERS

DIRTY FIGHTING TECHNIQUES

A FOCUS ON MARRIAGE AT FELLOWSHIP



DIRTY FIGHTING TECHNIQUES:

WAYS TO BE SURE YOUR CONFLICT INJURES THE RELATIONSHIP

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*Turning Points Social Service Agency P.O. Box 74, Dumfries, VA 22026 703-221-4951

1. **Timing** - Pick the right time to begin an argument. Late at night, during a favorite TV show, after several drinks or just before your spouse has to leave for work are perfect options. As a general rule, look for the time they least expect it or are least able to respond.
2. **Escalation** - Move quickly from the issue to questioning their personality to whether it is worth the effort to stay together (issue-to-personality-to-relationship). Interpret the other's shortcomings as evidence of "bad faith" and the impossibility of a happy relationship.
3. **Brown Bagging** - List as many problems as possible in as much detail as possible. Don't stick to the original issue; rather, throw in all the problems you can think of. Don't limit yourself to the immediate issue. If they can't recall the offense, even better.
4. **Overgeneralize** - Use helpful words like "always" and "never," as in, "You are always late." This is likely to distract your spouse into discussing the overgeneralization rather than the issue and insure further misunderstandings.
5. **Cross-complain** - Respond to any complaint your partner may raise with one of your own. For example, "I'm late? Well, if it you ever had any clean clothes for me..." If done properly, you can balance their complaint against your complaint forever.
6. **Crucialize** - Exaggerate the importance of the issue with statements such as, "If you really loved us, you would never have done that," or "This proves that you don't care." Never concede that an issue is not absolutely critical, absolutely requiring immediate resolution.
7. **Ask Why** - "Why didn't you clean up?" Or, "Why were you late?" Implies that there must be something terribly wrong with them and that at issue is something more than some simple problem behavior that might otherwise be equally resolved.
8. **Blame** - Make it clear that the fault lies entirely with them and that once again you are simply the innocent victim. Don't admit that your behavior plays any part in the difficulty. Make sure they realize that they must change first.
9. **Pull Rank** - Rather than depend on the merits of your argument, pull rank by reminding him or her that you make more money, have more education, or are wiser or more experienced in such matters. Anything that enhances your status at their expense should be used.
10. **Don't Listen; Instead, Dominate** - Any time you appear to be listening, you run the risk of suggesting that you value your partner's opinion. Consider talking while they are presenting their case, pretending to read, or falling asleep.
11. **List Injustices** - this is a great morale builder. By reciting every injustice, or inequity you have experienced in the relationship, you will experience a renewed sense of moral self-righteousness. You can use this to justify almost any activity you have always wanted to engage in. For example, "Since you went ahead and bought that dress, I can buy a new car."
12. **Label** - by labeling somebody in a negative manner you can create the impression that they are totally at fault. Psychological label (i.e., "childish", "neurotic," "insecure," or "alcoholic") are particularly effective in obscuring issues where you may be vulnerable.
13. **Mind Reading** - Decide that you know the real reason why someone is acting in a certain way. That way, you can avoid having to debate issues. For example, "You only said that to set me up," or, "You don't really feel that way," are particularly effective.
14. **Fortune-telling** - Predicting the future saves you the effort of trying to resolve problems. "You will never change," or, "It would be easy for me to change, but you wouldn't live up to it," are statements which can protect you from having to make any effort at all.
15. **Sarcasm** - This is a great way of saying something without having to take responsibility for the communication. If you can say, "You're so smart..." just right, you can imply that they are stupid and deny that you said it at the same time.
16. **Avoid Responsibility** - Although not very elegant as a tactic, saying "I don't remember" can bring the discussion to an abrupt halt. Alcohol or fatigue can serve the same purpose, as in, "I must have been drunk."
17. **Leave** - No problem is so big or important that it can't be ignored. Walk out of the room, leave home, or just refuse to talk. Sometimes just threatening to leave can accomplish the same ends without the inconvenience involved in actually leaving.
18. **Reject Compromise** - Don't back down. Why settle for compromise when with a little luck you can really devastate them (and the relationship). Stick with a "one winner" philosophy.
19. **Personalize** - anybody can resolve conflicts if you stick to the issue. By shifting to personalities you can generate enough defensiveness to keep the conflict going forever.