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RELATIONSHIPS

HOW TO ALWAYS win a fight

There's the right way to win a fight and then there's the sneaky way. They both have their uses—so read up before your next fight. And use them at your own risk.
By Purabi Shridhar

“ argue very well. Ask any of my remaining friends. I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don't even invite me.” American humorist/writer Dave Barry underlines the fact that nothing can match the glee of winning a fight. So here are tips on how to win—the sensible way and the fun way.

TIME YOUR PUNCHES THE EXPERT-BACKED WAY PICK THE RIGHT MOMENT

“Choose a moment when both of you have some time and are in a fairly relaxed frame of mind, not rushing to or from work,” says Dr Rima Mukherji, consultant psychiatrist, Kolkata. “Point out what's wrong as close to the incident as possible, because it needs to be fresh in your memory,” adds Dr Samir Parikh, consultant psychiatrist, chief of Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Max Healthcare, Delhi. “Don't bring up old incidents at inappropriate times. And raise the

issue one-to-one. At work, it's best that both are aware of the agenda before you discuss it.”

WHEN ALL BETS ARE OFF CATCH HIM WHEN HE'S DOWN

Had an intimate dinner for two planned, but he came home three hours too late? Then that's the perfect time for you to bring up an overdue argument. He's already feeling guilty, so you have him at your mercy. Bombard him with all that you've been holding in and watch as he sinks lower and lower in his chair. The idea is to leverage that situational guilt to your advantage.

PREPARE FOR THE BLOW

THE EXPERT-BACKED WAY BE OPEN TO OTHER POINTS OF VIEW

“Be specific, take responsibility for your feelings, and be logical and open to counter views,” says Dr Parikh.

WHEN ALL BETS ARE OFF ADVERTISE YOUR SMALL WINS

If you're arguing with your sister, remind her of past arguments when you ultimately turned out to be right. In fact, don't ever let her forget it. Sport a devilish smile as you gloat and remind her of the time she got her facts wrong and lost a bet. Or the time you predicted she'd be late for something and then she was. The point is to make your opponent feel silly, less than sharp and on edge. That's when you cut in with your brilliant argument and win the fight hands down.

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FIGHT A LITTLE DIRTY

THE EXPERT-BACKED WAY DON'T BE OFFENSIVE

However angry you are and however tempting it is to turn the argument personal, don't. Author Paul Sloane in his article *How to win arguments—dos, don'ts and sneaky tactics* says, "Attack the issue, not the person. If the other party attacks you, then you can take the high ground—I'm surprised at you making personal attacks like that." "Never get aggressive, verbally or physically," adds Dr Parikh. "Mud slinging and personal attacks lead nowhere. You may win the argument but face loss of dignity in the relationship."

WHEN ALL BETS ARE OFF THROW THE BALL IN HIS COURT

The two of you have been arguing vehemently for a good two hours and neither of you is showing any signs of letting go. Just then, when he's least expecting it, shrug and say, "Okay, I give in, you're right". This will get him thoroughly confused and suspicious. He won't know what's behind your sudden capitulation and will wonder if he has truly won or if you're secretly planning your revenge. This will keep him on tenterhooks and that's your cue to drive the point home. >

47%

The percentage of women who said they used sex to get their way with their partners

— FEMINA LOVE AND SEX SURVEY 2008

She believed that to get down and dirty, you gotta go in all pink and pretty

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PRACTISE THE STANCE

THE EXPERT-BACKED WAY USE POSITIVE BODY LANGUAGE

"Avoid body language that comes across as being hostile or tense, such as sitting with your arms crossed, fist clenched or sitting at the edge of the chair," says Dr Mukherji. "Are you frowning? Is your jaw clenched? These are dead giveaways and mean that it is unlikely you are going to be calm and confident." So instead of hopping on one foot, Dr Parikh says, "Sitting down and discussing is always better. Use a normal tone of voice and fewer gestures."

WHEN ALL BETS ARE OFF PLAY THE DRAMA QUEEN

Take a cue from prime-time soap operas. Yell, scream, weep, cry, sigh out loud, slap your forehead, bite your lip, pretend to talk to someone up there as if seeking divine guidance, look small and defenceless, or go stony silent—anything dramatic to throw the other person off kilter. If it's something you don't want the other person to do, such as go on a business trip, add dramatic statements such as "I had a dream and I know I'll fall terribly ill if you leave." He may still go, but he'll feel vaguely guilty about it. It's a moral victory.

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GO FOR THE KILL

THE EXPERT-BACKED WAY LISTEN!

"It's important to be a good listener," says Dr Mukherji. "It is only then that you catch contradictory or illogical statements. And as soon as that happens, you can drive home your point easily."

WHEN ALL BETS ARE OFF PLAY THE BLAME GAME!

This is where you turn your offensive best. Put the entire blame on her—how there would have been no need for this mess if she, your mother, had not done this thing or made that statement and so on. Pepper your statements with lots of 'always' and 'never'—"You never let me do things my way, even when I was a kid", "You're always trying to control me", "You want me to turn into you!" It's emotional, it's effective and, at the very least, it buys you time. ■

She knew exactly what she'd feed him for dinner that night. Rose petal and thorny-leaf salad!



SMS

WHAT SNEAKY TRICKS DO YOU USE TO WIN FIGHTS? SMS US AT 53636 (TYPE FE <SPACE> F0378, YOUR RESPONSE, NAME AND CITY)

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