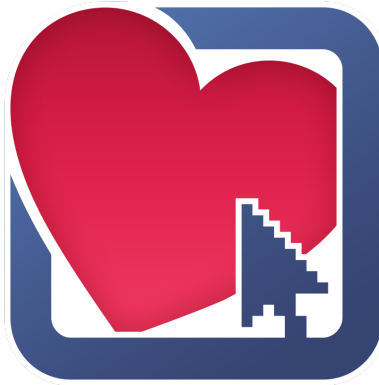


Never Fight Again: A Simple Method For Relationship Bliss

A Digital Romance Special Report

by Michael Fiore



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Introduction

"You're an asshole just like your dad," Tasha whispered through her tears. She whispered it like a scream. Sharp and pointed and aimed right at the softest part of him.

She wanted to hurt him. She wanted to watch him squirm. She wanted him to be as hurt as she was. To be as angry and beat up and disappointed and RAGEFUL as she was. She wanted him to cry and yell and threaten her. She wanted to see that red, angry light in his eyes so she knew that he felt SOMETHING. Something about her. Something about them. Something about what had happened to them. She wanted to taste his tears and suck what love was left out of them.

But he just stood there.

He just stood there and clenched his jaw, with dead eyes. She watched his fingers go white at the knuckle and giggled a little in the back of her throat. A giggle like a cry.

"Don't," he said, flat and toneless and cold. And deadly. And nothing like the man she loved at all.

Years ago, he'd slipped a ring on her finger and she'd felt her heart fly to the moon. It had cost him more than he could afford, but to Tim it was worth it. She was worth it. She lit him up. She was intoxicating. Beautiful. Kind. She gave him something to fight for. Something to go to that damned job for. Something to suck up to his arrogant prick of a boss for.

She was nothing like his mom. He was nothing like his dad (he told himself again and again in the night when nobody was watching). They would make this work. They'd be in love like right then forever. They'd be happy.

But slowly (or maybe not) everything had changed. She stopped smiling when he came home. Her body got tense when he touched her. They barely kissed, and when they did it was desperate. Angry. Violent.

And they fought about everything.

Money (there was never enough)...

Her ex boyfriend (who he knew she wished she'd stayed with. Knew it in the bile in his throat whenever she mentioned his name and what good "friends" they were now).

His coworker with the cute ass and the tongue ring (who he dreamed about in bed at night, laying next to his wife. Would she want him the way Tasha never did anymore? Would it be EASY with her?).

"Communication"... (what the hell did she mean?)

And their little boy. Jacob. Just 4 now. Beautiful. Sleeping just 30 feet away. Dear god, he hoped the kid was sleeping. He hoped he wouldn't hear the way Tim had heard 30 years earlier, clutching his teddy bear and listening to his parents flay each other alive in the kitchen. He hoped it wouldn't bore into his little boy brain and sit there like a time bomb waiting to sabotage every relationship he had. Forcing everything good to go so God damned bad.

"Please," he said.

It barely came out. It was more a choke than a word, but she heard. She had magic ears he could never understand. She heard everything, remembered everything. Threw everything back at him.

"Please what, asshole?" she cried. "Please what?"

"Just...just...please, Tasha. Please," he said with just a hint of a sob.

And then her eyes softened and her jaw released and they just looked at each other. And for just a moment it was quiet. A quiet before what they both knew would be a terrible, terrible storm.

Hi, I'm Mike Fiore...

And if I've done my job right (I hope I have), this program is going to change your life forever.

Because I'm going to give you a set of simple, practical tools and *ideas* about love and relationships and men and women and expectations and

what the hell a relationship is actually supposed to be to help you get off the bitter, angry hamster wheel of broken hearts and bitter love. . .

And actually start enjoying this “love” thing again.

To actually start being happy. Waking up and looking at the man or woman next to you and feeling lucky to have them there. Coming home to your husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend and feeling that rush of excitement and love and affection and lust you used to feel before everything got angry and bitter and bad.

This program is short, simple, and challenging and probably says a bunch of things you don’t want to hear about WHY your relationships keep falling apart around you and whose fault it is when things go sour.

But it’s the truth.

And if you actually take it to heart and USE it, it works.

So here’s the deal I want to make with you.

I’m going to give you the flat-out truth about WHY you fight so much in every relationship you get into. Why the love drains out like water through a sieve. Why you ALWAYS end up angry and bitter and disappointed. Why you feel attacked. Why your heart feels so broken all the time with jagged pieces that press into your chest.

And I’m going to tell you what to do to actually have a GOOD relationship that all your friends and family will be jealous of.

But, in exchange, I need you to do something too: I need you to promise me to read through everything in this report at least twice, to listen to the interview I did with Claire Casey where she had me expand on some of the ideas, and to “try on” accepting that what I say is true. To actually try out what I say in your relationship and in your life.

You know, give it a shot.

And then let me know on my Facebook wall what you really think. What you really felt. What really happened for you.

Deal?

Good.

Turn the page. Let’s get started.

Best,

Mike

P.S. The absolute best way to get in touch with me for any reason is by posting on my Facebook wall. You can find it here: <http://ttrb.me/facebook>.

P.P.S. This program is called “Never Fight Again” not “Never Disagree Again.” What I’m going to teach you is how to get your brain around what you’re REALLY fighting about and how to disagree (and even argue) the right way so that you don’t feel like your partner is sticking nails through your eyes and so that your partner doesn’t feel like you’re going to kill them in the night. You’ll thank me.

P.P.S. If you’re in an emotionally or physically abusive relationship, please get help right away. Some of what you read in this booklet will help you, but if it’s gotten bad to the point where there’s violence or emotional cruelty, you need to get out.

P.P.P.S. This program is a work in progress that continues to evolve. I’d love to hear your thoughts about what works, what doesn’t work and what could be improved. Send your thoughts to reviews@digitalromance-inc.com.

Never Fight Again

Before we get into how to STOP fighting so damned much, we have to do three things:

1. We have to cover some BIG concepts about love and relationships you may not have heard before (and maybe you've even been told the opposite).
2. We have to identify the REAL reasons you get into so many stupid (or not so stupid) fights in the first place. (Some of this might piss you off.)
3. We have to establish what your DEAL BREAKERS are (the important stuff you absolutely **won't** ever bend on) so you don't end up in the wrong relationship or with the wrong person.

And then FINALLY we'll get into the actual Never Fight Again step-by-step techniques.

Got it?

Good.

Let's get to work.

Love Me How I NEED To Be Loved (Big Ideas About Love And Romance)

"I love you."

"I love you, too."

"No, I LOVE you."

"I love you, too."

"No, I LOOOOOVE you."

"I know."

"What?"

"I said, 'I know.'"

"I know you said, 'I know.' I heard you say, 'I KNOW.' Why are you being such a jerk?"

Before we get into all the fighting stuff, I need to tune your brain a bit with 8 core concepts about love and relationships that make this whole "being with somebody forever" thing 1000 times easier.

Each of these ideas could really be a booklet all by itself, and I've expanded on a lot of them in newsletters, videos, and other programs, but for the stake of getting to the meat as quickly as possible, I'm just going to hit the core points.

Some of this is going to sound like common sense, and you're going to feel like you should write me an email saying, "I already KNEW that." But did you? And just because you knew it intellectually, does that mean you were actually acting on it?

1. “Love” means different things to men and women

A while back, I ran a webinar for 5,000 women called “How To Know If A Man Really Loves You Or Not.” (If you want, you can check out the replay of that webinar here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnH7C_PpdMk)

I wasn’t surprised by the response, because “does he really love me” is the number one question we get from women ALL the time. (We’ve never once had a guy ask this question.)

Whenever I get asked that question, I always have to look whoever is asking in the digital eye and throw a really simple, weird question right back at them. A question that seems really stupid at first and then settles in like cold, bitter pudding in their stomach.

The question is. . .

“Well, what the heck do you mean by ‘love?’”

Now, I can hear you guffawing right now and saying, “Mike, don’t be a stupid idiot. EVERYBODY knows what love is.”

But the fact is, in the REAL world love means VERY different things to different people.

As I like to say, love is like snow. Every flake is different. (In this case, you are the flake.)

Actually, we should really have different words for what we mean by “love,” because in the crazy world of dating and marriage and divorce and drunken bachelor parties, love can easily get mixed up with **lust** and **companionship** and **respect** and **fear of being alone** and **obsession**.

To A LOT of women, love means. . .

“Is he obsessed with me like that vampire from *Twilight* (the one with the pasty skin and the stalker complex), does he desire me and ONLY me, would he protect me from dragons, does he think about me ALL the time, does his penis shrivel up if he even THINKS about another girl, will he be MINE forever and ONLY mine, does he love ME?????”

(Every guy who’s reading this just had their skin crawl with invisible crazy passion beetles of revulsion. Yikes!)

To most guys however, (excepting the crazy artist types) love means. . .

“Do I like how I feel when she’s around?” or “Am I satisfied day to day with her?” or “Do I really just like her as a person and how she makes me feel?” or “Does the idea of her with somebody else make me want to go all Captain Caveman, rip off his skull, and go bowling with it?”

In other words, after that initial CRAZY spark of attraction wears off (and it almost always DOES wear off over time), what men and women really WANT in a relationship are completely different.

In general, women want “excitement,” “passion,” “devotion,” and “drama.” I don’t mean drama in the “Oh my god, she’s so DRAMATIC” sense, I mean it in the “I want my love affair to be a story that’s going to be told until the end of time where he EARNs me and treats me like a princess” sense. In other words, I mean what the word actually means. =-)

And guys want **appreciation and respect**.

For the ladies reading, that “respect” thing is huge. One of the absolute biggest reasons guys get antsy in relationships is because they fundamentally don’t feel **respected** by the woman they love. Again and again, guys write in talking about how they feel they can’t do anything right, and how the beautiful, happy woman they fell for has become an angry shrew. (Yes, you’re rolling your eyes right now saying he MADE you that way. Let it go for now. Sheesh.).

I could ramble about this for days, but just to boil it down: to be happy in a long-term relationship, a woman needs to KNOW how a guy REALLY feels about her (this is partly his job—he has to show her how he feels—and partly her job—she has to have enough self esteem to be able to ACCEPT it when he shows her).

And a guy needs to KNOW that his woman RESPECTS and APPRECIATES HIM for BEING A GUY... (Yes, you can get mad at him for not changing diapers or doing the dishes, but you also need to give him props for starting your car on cold days, pulling your hair properly when you have sex, going out and hunting a boar, grunting a lot, and BEING A GUY.)

Just as a quick sidebar. . .

It’s a slippery slope, but one of the EASIEST ways to make a GUY happy in a relationship is for a woman to BE happy herself. There’s an old

adage that says, “Happy wife, happy life,” and a lot of guys swear by it. Man after man writes in to say “Everything would be great if she just weren’t so mad all the time. I don’t understand it.”

On the other end of things, the easiest way for a guy to make a woman happy is to show that she is ONE of your TOP THREE priorities at all times.

I’m not saying she has to be your NUMBER ONE priority all the time (then you’d be a stalker) but you’d be shocked how much easier it is to be in a relationship when you show that you’re willing to drop EVERYTHING for her when necessary and when you’re willing to make at least some sacrifice for her on a regular basis (even if you hate her boss and would rather fry your own tongue and eat it than go to dinner with him again. It’s called compromise.)

2. Nobody can MAKE you happy (or miserable) but you

Let’s be vulgar for a second.

No man or woman can “make” you happy in your life any more than they can “make” you have an orgasm.

Actually, years ago, a girlfriend and I found this out the hard way. We were at the edge of a relationship apocalypse. I was at a bad place in my life and was pulling away. And, using her crazy female emotional radar, she was getting more and more anxious (which was pushing me further away, which was making her more anxious, which was...you get the idea).

At one point she asked (begged) me to read a book called *Passionate Marriage*.

It’s a dry book, but it’s got some good ideas in it. I read through the first chapter then went rushing back to my girlfriend all excited.

All during our relationship, she’d been trying to slip a chain around my neck about how I should do things to make her happy and how mad she was at me for “rebellious.” (Sheesh, she didn’t understand guys at all. What was I, a pet? I mean, yes, she bought me a collar at one point,

but I thought it was more of a joke or a toy than a metaphor. Guess I was wrong.)

Anyway, in the book the author talked about something that blew my mind at the time.

He said: "It's not your job to **make** your partner happy. And it's not their job to **make** you happy, either. The only one responsible for your happiness is you."

I was all excited about this. I thought it would save my relationship. But somehow, even though she read the exact same words, she got a totally different message out of it. Somehow she thought it said, "Mike should change everything about himself in order to make this relationship work." We broke up. She's married now to a really nice guy and we're still kind of friends. Or at least we can see each other at parties without wanting to draw the knives out. And she can shake my girlfriend's hand without trying to dig her fingernails into her palm. So that's good.

Anyway, this is a BIG concept. WAY too many men and women get into relationships thinking this is going to be the guy or girl who finally makes them happy. But it just doesn't work this way.

Your job in a relationships isn't to **MAKE** your partner happy, it's to be a good partner. To be in their corner. To give them love. To be a shoulder to cry on. And to do everything you can to be happy yourself.

Now, am I saying you should stay with someone who makes you miserable? Of course not. And it's not really **THEM** who's making you miserable. Nobody can make you feel anything unless you give them the power to do so. You're responsible for your own emotions and your own reactions to the craziness and joy and trauma of the world.

Honestly, if you just give up on the idea of your partner making you happy (or breaking your back and killing yourself trying to **MAKE** them happy...), you'll feel a huge amount of weight come off your chest and will be able to get to work on your actual job in a relationship: Being an awesome partner and **HELPING** your partner find the happiness you want them to experience.

3. You don't have to agree on everything (or even most things) to have a great relationship

"I say, 'potato,' you say, 'Compilation copy of Gary Larsen's *Far Side* cartoons.'"

Ahem. Time to kick some emotional puppies. (I LOVE kicking emotional puppies. It's probably my favorite part of this job – no real puppies are ever harmed. I love dogs.)

Your partner is not "your other half." Your partner is not there to "complete you." Your partner is not some weird cosmic extension of you thrust into the universe and given the penis (or vagina) you don't have.

Nope, your partner is a full-on person who can't (and shouldn't) read your mind. And because they're a person, they're ALWAYS going to have fundamentally different ideas about everything from politics to religion to the right way to take the top off a stuck jar of peanut butter (it involves a blow torch, cream cheese frosting, and a really skilled dwarf with very dexterous fingers).

And there's no "perfect" person for you out there. There's no "the one." Like I said in one of my more popular newsletters, the one is MADE, not found. And I don't mean that you find a guy or a girl and go at them with a psychic scalpel until they are suddenly THE ONE for you. I mean that you meet someone who makes your heart flutter, you get to know them, you love them, you compromise, you grow together, and one day you wake up and realize they have BECOME the one because **you** have BECOME the one for them, too, without even really noticing.

Couples who "never fight" don't never fight because they agree on everything. They never fight because they love and respect each other enough to realize that they are separate beings skipping and jumping through the universe and that you can love someone passionately while disagreeing with them just as passionately."

Does it ACTUALLY MATTER if your wife realizes what a crazy African Socialist-Who-Is-Trying-To-Destroy-The-Country Obama is like you do? Or does it matter more that you love cuddling up next to her at night, the feel of her breath on your skin, the kindness in her heart?

Does it ACTUALLY MATTER if your husband accepts Gary Sinise as the new messiah striding the earth and spreading the gospel of Forrest Gump... or does it matter that he's a damned good dad and good

provider who's always willing to mow the lawn so you don't have to do it?

Fact: The longer you're with somebody (and the longer the "love goggles" you got when they first picked you up at the bowling alley are off), the more stuff you're going to find that you ABSOLUTELY disagree with them on.

And you've got a choice:

You can DESPERATELY try to convince them you're right. (Which almost never works. Arguments don't convince folks to change their opinions, conversations do. And only sometimes.)

You can get angry and develop CONTEMPT for who they are and how they look at the world (but that will KILL your relationship faster than a bullet shot from a gravity-defying assassin in a John Woo movie).

BIG NOTE: Dr. John Gottman from the University of Washington has shown again and again that the number one indicator of whether a relationship will stand the test of time or not is NOT whether couples agree on everything or not. It's whether they have CONTEMPT for who the other is. Contempt is the toxic sludge that chokes love and it shows its teeth often and with crazy viciousness. If you have contempt for the TV shows your wife watches ("Jesus Christ, Maria, you know *Toddlers and Tiaras* is the harbinger of the apocalypse, right?") or if you have contempt for how your man spends his free time ("I just can't believe I married a guy who plays VIDEO GAMES. What are you, five years old?"), you're slowly (or not so slowly) stabbing your love in the heart. Sucks, huh?

OR you can just let it go. You can realize that the vast majority of stuff that makes your blood boil and gets you screaming at the television just doesn't MATTER when it comes to happiness in your relationship.

Does SOME stuff matter? Sure. We'll talk about that in the deal breakers section. But the "stupid stuff" is just stupid stuff.

4. Love isn't always enough (don't be a love victim)

Here's a kick in the gut: "loving" someone isn't enough. You have to like them too.

Years and years ago, I had a girlfriend I was DESPERATELY in love with. We were together for three years. We were goofy and silly and loved each other like two smitten koala bears. But she hated all my friends, we had no sex life to speak of, and we got so bored hanging out together that I would pull out my toenails just for amusement.

Heck, I get emails every day (mostly from women) saying...

"Mike, I love this man. He is my moon and my stars. I adore him. He says he loves me. But he keeps getting my sisters pregnant. How do I make him stop getting my sisters pregnant so he just loves ME?"

And the answer is: "Get the hell out."

Love is a powerful force burned into our genes by biology and evolution so we'll make cute and annoying babies... and love can make us stay in REALLY bad situations.

I'll say it again, loving someone isn't enough of a reason to stay with them. You have to LIKE them, respect them, and adore them, too.

5. What you LOVE about your partner is also what you HATE about your partner

Jim met Sarah at a night club. He fell head over heels for the hot little Latina on the dance floor in the tight black dress. She had joy on her face. She LOVED to dance. It was electricity in her veins. He got up the nerve to talk to her, and she looked at him with soft eyes and melted her body against his...

But now it's two years later and he HATES it when she goes out dancing with the girls and gets dressed up when he just wants to stay home and watch Project Runway.

Listen: I see this again and again, but the thing that first ATTRACTED you to your partner is almost always the first thing to REPULSE you from your partner and piss you off in the long run.

Hell, I'll use my own (pretty awesome) relationship as an example.

My girlfriend is VERY laid back. She's basically a hippie. She's got a hippie van. She had a hippie dog. And I LOVE that she's so laid back. When I first met her I couldn't believe how LITTLE anxiety she had, how she just went with the flow, and how unconcerned she was.

But she's also LATE ALL THE TIME. I mean ALL THE TIME. To the point that if I want to be somewhere ON time I actually go without her and meet her there (because I'm a stupidly punctual person who thinks 10 minutes early is right on time).

And you know what? Her being laid back and being late all the time is the SAME thing. Being late all the time is just the mutant extreme extension of her laidbackedness.

Turning it around, she LOVES that I'm tall and strong and funny and can fill up a room...

And she HATES that I'm loud and raucous and have this desperate need to be the center of attention.

But it's the SAME thing.

Make a list of what you LOVE about your partner and what you HATE about your partner and you'll be shocked at how it's really the same list. And you can't get rid of the part you REALLY hate without getting rid of the part you really like.

6. You can't "win" a fight with your partner... ever

Here's a question:

Do you want to be right, or do you want to be happy? Because the only way to be happy in a relationship is to stop trying to win all the time.

("Mike, I want to be right AND I want to be happy!" Too bad. It doesn't work that way.)

Couples who have healthy, loving long-term relationships never try to beat the other person (except at board games – and maybe not even then).

I know, I know, some of us are incredibly competitive (um, me) and have a need to be right and to grind our competition into the dust like Conan the Barbarian.

And that's great for the football field or your job or when you're playing *Halo*.

But it's a really STUPID attitude to have in a relationship. Your partner isn't (or shouldn't be) your enemy.

Actually, this is a pretty good place to talk about what a "fight" is in the first place.

And we'll do that by breaking down the differences between disagreements, arguments, fights, and wars.

A **disagreement** is when you (duh) don't agree on something. It can be on something big or it can be on something small, but the key is that with a disagreement, you're usually able to keep the **emotional** aspect under control.

Yeah, you disagree with your husband about where the cream cheese is supposed to go in the refrigerator or whether the president is an alien, but you don't feel ATTACKED that he disagrees with you and you don't feel the need to ATTACK him because he disagrees with you.

You just disagree.

And generally in a disagreement, you're at least PARTIALLY open to the idea of changing your mind or changing your position on something if you're convinced to do so.

In my own relationship my girlfriend and I disagree on...

- Religion (and no, I'm not going to talk about what I believe here. Because I don't want to fight =-))
- The right way to clean a bathroom.
- How many kids we want and when.
- Where we'd really like to live in the future.
- Whether traffic laws are stupid or not.
- How early or late we should be for stuff.

- Other stuff that's none of your business.

These are decently big things to disagree on but they don't cause a huge rift in our relationship because...

1. We can both see the other person's viewpoint on the issue. (Or just don't care. I couldn't care less about what she believes religiously.)
2. We don't feel the need or the desire to **ATTACK** the person for the issue.

It's just a disagreement. And because we're not **SUPER EMOTIONAL AND COMBATIVE** about this stuff, we can discuss it like rational humans and even make compromises.

An **argument** is when you feel passionately about something and feel like it's important to you. You're willing to take hits for it and are willing to do some damage to get what you want, but it's still about the **THING** you're arguing about and not about hurting the other person. There's nothing wrong with arguing in a relationship as long as you both know where you stand and know exactly how you feel about each other.

As a brief example, a few months ago I was talking to my sister-in-law's father about gun control. He's a hunter. He has a lot of guns. I'm not, I don't. We both had **PASSIONATE** ideas about the issue and were discussing it animatedly... but we were arguing, not fighting. There was never any attempt on either of our ends to insult or belittle the other person. It was about the **ISSUE**, not about defeating the other guy.

A **fight** is when you want to **HURT** the other person and win. In a fight the actual issue or problem you're fighting about stops really mattering. You've passed the point of rational discourse, let emotion run rampant, and are fighting either because you feel attacked and need to defend yourself or because you want to **HURT** the other person (often in revenge for hurting you).

We'll talk about the real reasons people fight in a minute.

And finally, a **war** is when you're going for scorched earth. You're not trying to convince the other person of anything. You're not even necessarily trying to win. You're just trying to **DESTROY** them, punish them, subjugate them, make them pay.

A lot of divorces are wars. Which is stupid, because the only people that win are the lawyers who take all your money.

THE BIG KEY HERE is that when there are issues in your relationship (and there are issues in **EVERY** relationship), you want to have disagreements and even arguments, but keep away from fights and wars.

We'll talk about how to do that in a minute.

7. No one will ever love you unless you love yourself first

Remember when I said that nobody can make you happy but you? Well, you can't expect the man or woman in your life to give you all the LOVE you need either.

Plain and simple, if you don't like yourself (love yourself, actually) it's going to be almost impossible to have a life-long committed relationship with somebody.

And like I'll say in a minute, most of the big fights couples get into have a lot more to do with self esteem than they do with whatever the hell you think you're fighting about.

And if my inbox is any indicator, lack of self love (eww) is one of the biggest reasons folks get dumped.

8. Sometimes you just have to walk away

I know, I know. I'm the big quasi-famous-best-selling-author-relationship-advice guy. I'm supposed to tell you to cling to each other like desperate baby spider monkeys no matter what and stroke your hair while I tell you that ANY relationship can be fixed.

But that's just &##\$shit. (Umm, I think I blanked out the wrong part.)

A couple quick things:

ALL relationships end. All of them.

Plain and simple, any relationship you're in is going to end SOMEDAY. Either you guys are going to break up (for good reasons or bad reasons) OR one of you is going to die (and the relationship is going to end because corpses can't go on dates).

So many folks write in asking me about how to make love last "forever." But forever is a myth. Forever doesn't exist. And, honestly, 20 or 30 years is a REALLY long time to be together. Focusing on forever is actually a great way to kill a relationship because it takes your focus off

being in a good relationship NOW that actually makes you happy and that sends electricity to your naughty bits.

KNOWING it can end is a good thing.

A healthy relationship is a relationship where both folks involved know they COULD leave if it made sense to. I know full well that my girlfriend doesn't need me and could meet somebody else to share her future with, and that makes me work harder to keep her. She knows full well that I don't need her and could cry myself to sleep in a bottle for 20 years before dying bitter and alone (OK, not really), and that makes her work harder to keep me.

To paraphrase Steve Jobs: Death is a great motivator. Knowing that you don't have forever is a great way to focus you on having a good relationship now.

And once you accept the other seven principles I've laid out – once you start being responsible for your own happiness, loving yourself, refusing to be a love victim, it gives you a wonderful power. The power to know that you CAN leave if you need to and you'll be OK.

Now, I'm not saying you should be one of those awful couples who's always threatening to "leave you like a dog and you'll never see your son again."

That's awful.

But just know in your heart that you are strong. You are independent. You'll be OK. And then CHOOSE to be in a relationship and to be in love every day because you WANT to. Not because you have to.

Whew!

OK, reread this whole section really quickly before we move on.

Love So Hard It's Like A Punch In The Face (The Real Reasons You Fight So Much Now)

Hate isn't the opposite of love. Apathy is.

OK, now that I've given you Remedial Relationships 101 With Professor Michael Fiore (I am not actually a professor. Or a doctor. Or a lawyer), let's get into the main event.

So why do we fight so often and so damned viciously when what we really want is love?

When I was writing this little booklet I asked my (awesome) Facebook page <http://ttrb.me/facebook> (Go like it. I promise you'll be glad you did. I'll wait. Back? OK, cool.)

"What's the number one thing men and women fight about in relationships?"

And I got a bunch of answers.

Hundreds of answers, actually (some of which were WEIRDLY specific having to do with the exact geography and dimensions of certain body parts.)

But out of all those HUNDREDS of answers from both men and women (the women seemed ANGRIER. Why is that?), they all really boiled down to a few basic categories.

What are the categories?

I bet you can guess because YOU fight about them all the time, they were...

1. **Money.** *How much you make, how much you spend, what it means when she makes more than him, why she has to blow so much on clothes, why he HAS to have the new iPad, how the hell you're going to pay for Jimmy's braces. Money makes the world go round and rips relationships apart like an industrial-strength paper shredder.*

2. **Free time.** *Not having enough free time. What you do with your free time. Why don't you want to spend your free time with ME? I feel like I'm in competition with your hobbies, can't we just sit on the couch and BE together? DAMMIT I have to go to work now and you're just going to stay home all day and watch Oprah. GAH!*
3. **Household chores.** *I folded the laundry LAST time and it's YOUR turn this time. You are SUCH a slob. No, we can't afford a maid. NO it's not OK to just leave the bed unmade all day. What, were you raised in a barn? OK, we're going to make a grid that lays out EXACTLY how many chores each of us has to do each week and I need you to fill it out and we'll put gold stars when the chore is done and we'll put BLACK stars if it's not done and if you get too many BLACK stars I'm going to rip your scrotum off, OK?)*
4. **Sex.** *She wants TOO MUCH sex, he wants too LITTLE sex, why does he have to get so FREAKY about it? Doesn't she know that a man's penis is NOT a construction crane? I just wish he would look at me like he USED to look at me before we got married. Why does he watch so much porn? Why does she watch so LITTLE porn? I feel like the testosterone humming through my body has damned me to a life of frustration, anger, and pain.*
5. **How to raise the kids.** *I want the kids to be Mormon Scientologist Humanists and SHE wants the kids to be Catholic Universalist Aliens. Should you ground the kids or let them run free like rabid dogs? Do grades matter? Should Jimmy get a job? NO you are NOT telling my son it's OK to smoke weed when he's 16. Sheesh!*
6. **Jealousy.** *Ex-boyfriends. Ex-girlfriends. Sexy baristas with tongue rings. Why are there still pictures of you with THAT WOMAN on Facebook? Female friends. Male friends. Would you PLEASE not eye-#\$ the waitress when I'm sitting right here?*
7. **Other basically stupid stuff.** *Religion. Politics. The damned remote control. Yes, I called religion and politics stupid because when it comes to relationships and having GOOD relationships they basically are.*

And again and again, men and women ranted and raved about how they had the SAME fight with their partner again and again and again (and again and again).

In fact, most people said they only really had a couple of fights with their partner, and that it was pretty much always about the same thing, with

the same words and the same white hot anger and the same unsatisfactory results and/or awesome make-up sex.

What's funny to me about almost all the answers I got and all the answers I found when I went around the internet looking at articles about this stuff was how fundamentally dumb and **WRONG** most of them are. (I can say this because I'm an expert. Rachael Ray told me so.)

Don't get me wrong – sex, money, free time, jealousy, uneven distribution of household chores, who gets to hold the remote, and all that are perfectly fine reasons for a discussion or a disagreement. I mean, they're STUFF you have to deal with, and it can be REALLY frustrating when the person you LOVE doesn't walk lockstep in tune with you on exactly how you want to handle something.

But after helping thousands of people have better relationships, I can tell you this stuff isn't the REAL reasons couples fight at all.

Nope, in the real world (of messy emotions that is love), we really only fight about five things.

So what do we REALLY fight about?

I could list out a WHOLE BUNCH of psychobabble here about why folks go for the throat of the person they supposedly love...

But if you peel back the layers of the onion and examine human beings for the crazy, passionate, incredibly **irrational** creatures we are, you'll realize that (if we actually love or even like our partner) we only fight for five simple reasons...

We fight because...

1. We feel **insecure** in the relationship and aren't 100% sure that our partner really loves us or is there for us. (Women in particular have a tendency to pick fights with the men in their lives because they want to get a "hot" response out an emotionally shut-down guy. To a lot of women getting ANY emotion, even a really negative one, is better than getting no emotion at all.)
2. We feel **disrespected** in the relationship and don't feel like our partner celebrates us or likes us enough. (Guys in particular are prone to this.)

3. We have **crappy self esteem**, are emotionally needy, want our partner to fill the gaping hole deep in our hearts, and get MAD at them when they don't do it or make us happy.
4. We have crazy or unrealistic **expectations** about what a great relationship is supposed to be and rage against the cage of our own disappointment when Prince Charming or Miss Perfect turns out to be an honest-to-god human being.
5. We've got "Lady MacBeth Syndrome" and are **worried about what our partner's actions, inactions, reputation, body, or whatever else says about US** (because we see our partner as an extension of us when really they're a totally separate person we choose to have around).

The **really important** bit to understand here is that the reason we get into a FIGHT with our partner has VERY little to do with their actions and almost EVERYTHING to do with OUR emotions and our own imperfect understanding of what a relationship is supposed to be. (Or we're dating or are married to a psychopath who keeps shooting us with acid-coated Nerf darts. Better leave.)

In other words, we are ALL crazy, egotistical, and (above all) irrational freaks. (Me too!)

And we're the most evolved species on the planet.

Cool, huh?

(QUICK NOTE: I'm not saying the people we love aren't responsible for their actions. They are. And if they're not willing to do the work the way you are because you're reading this booklet, that's a problem. We'll get to that in a second.)

The Fight Translator

We're going to get to steps that will change your whole idea about what a relationship should be (and make it MUCH easier to actually be happy) in just a second.

But, really quickly, it's time to do a little magic in the form of what I call "The Fight Translator."

The Fight Translator is a really simple tool where we take what we THINK we're fighting about and translate it into the actual deep, dark, and dirty emotional muck that's actually driving us nuts and making us wonder what it would be like to drag a razor blade across our partner's eyeball. (Ew.)

Here's how it works. . .

Step 1: Pick one of your "favorite" fights.

The fight you've had at least a dozen times with the man or woman you love (and it's always the same damned fight again and again and again).

Step 2: Write down what you THINK the fight is about.

(Or what you thought the fight was about before you read these breathless, golden pages.)

For example:

Mark writes down, "Mary is late ALL THE TIME. She was late for our damned wedding. Why can't she just be on TIME for something ONCE? Doesn't she realize how RUDE it is?"

For another example:

Mary writes down, "Mark just lives in his own world. We go out to a dinner or a party or something, and he's on his cell phone the whole time. I wish he would just. . ."

Step 3: Use the five "things we really fight about" categories above to translate the fight from the action your partner does that bothers you so much to the actual emotional stuff that's rattling around in your brain and causing the REAL problem.

For example:

Mark's BIG FIGHT is that Mary is late all the time (for everything. I mean, really. Can't she just leave five minutes earlier instead of sitting on the couch?). Looking at the list, Mark figures out that the reason Mary's being late all the time BOTHERS him so much is because. . .

- A. He feels like she's disrespecting HIS time and the effort he puts into being on time for things
- B. He feels like he's being lumped in with her as somebody who's "always late," even though he's usually one of those anally on-time people who sets his watch by the atomic clock

For another example:

Mary's BIG FIGHT was that Mark doesn't obey social norms and spends all his time out in public on his damned iPhone.

Using the Fight Translator, Mary figures out that the reason this bothers her so much is because. . .

- A. It doesn't meet the expectations she had about what the man of her dreams was going to be like. (Prince Charming wasn't addicted to his cell phone.)
- B. She's afraid of what having a boyfriend who doesn't obey social norms says about her

Let's do one more example:

Tiffany always gets mad at Todd for looking at other women when they're out in public. (Todd really should know better and be more subtle. Yes, ALL men look at other women, but the smart and properly-socialized ones among us are subtle about it. Todd's an idiot.)

Using the Fight Translator, she decides that the REAL reason it bothers her so much is because it punches her self esteem in the face and brings up feelings she's always had about not being pretty enough.

Step 4: Create a clear line separating the ACTION your partner does that triggers your emotions and the actual emotions themselves.
(This goes back to the idea that nobody can MAKE you feel anything unless you let them.)

For example:

Mark would usually say, "Mary is always late and it makes me feel really disrespected and angry."

But he changes that to. . .

"Mary is always late. I feel really disrespected and angry."

I know, I know. It's kind of cheesy. But it works. I promise. The key is to realize that your partner really does NOT have the power to make you feel anything unless you let them.

Step 5: Decide if this is worth fighting about and if fighting about it will actually cause any change in the behavior.

Is Mark yelling at Mary about being late actually going to make her stop being late when it NEVER has before? Is this a fight that Mark wants to live and die on or is it something he can just let go?

Is Tiffany causing a stink at the restaurant going to get Todd to stop looking at other girls? Or does Tiffany have the self esteem to know that she's smoking hot and the confidence to realize that Todd looking at another girl isn't about her?

(Tangentially: the best way to handle this situation the first time it happens is to say, "She's cute, isn't she?" Drives guys nuts.)

(Double tangentially: If you want a guy to stop being so damned obvious about checking out other girls, you need to bring it up calmly, not in a fight.)

(Triple tangentially: If you want a woman to not get mad at you for checking out other girls, you need to make sure she catches you checking HER out at least as often AND be way more subtle and respectful about it when you look at other girls. Duh.)

Deal Breakers: What You Should NEVER Compromise Or Give In On

OK, now that we've talked about WHY we fight, the difference between fights, arguments, disagreements, and wars, the core principals of a happy relationship, and a bunch of other stuff...

Let's run smack dab into a brick wall of misery.

Like I said before, "Love isn't always enough."

And one of the worst things I see again and again and again are men and women who give up too much of who they are in a relationship... who compromise on the fundamentals of who they are... or who even make themselves "love victims," putting up with emotional or even physical abuse because "I love him/her."

So before we go any further (and with full knowledge of everything else we've already talked about), I want you to make a list of exactly three DEAL BREAKERS in your love life and in your relationship.

These are the things that you absolutely, 100% will not bend or break on in your love life.

Which means...

- They have to be BIG.
- They have to be REALISTIC.
- And they have to be SHARED with your partner. There's absolutely no point at all in having deal breakers that are "secret" or with "assuming" that your deal breakers are just common sense. Because they're not.

So...

Step 1: Write out a short list of IMPORTANT things that are deal breakers for you in your relationship and why. And be HONEST.

For instance, Fiona is doing the Deal Breaker exercise.

She starts off by thinking about her past relationships and starts listing out things she will not put up with under any circumstances.

QUICK NOTE: There are two deal breakers that you get for free: physical abuse (being hit or physically abused in any way) and emotional abuse (being manipulated, belittled, torn down, gaslighted, or otherwise emotionally shat upon). No amount of love is enough to put up with that crap.

Her initial list says:

1. Kids. BECAUSE I know I would never feel complete in my life if I didn't have children.
2. Cheating. BECAUSE I respect myself too much to be with someone who doesn't respect me.
3. Getting fat or not taking care of yourself. BECAUSE I want to live a long life with you, and I want to keep being as attracted to you in the future as I am now.
4. Lying. BECAUSE I want to live a life of absolute and total honesty where we share EVERYTHING.
5. Porn. BECAUSE I want to be the absolute focus of your erotic life and because I feel inferior to those women.
6. Drugs and alcohol. BECAUSE I saw what alcoholism did to my dad and because I want the real you, not the altered you. An occasional drink or a little weed is no big deal, but I can't be with a man who does heavy drugs.

(And she can go on from there.)

Step 2: Decide if your deal-breaker list is realistic.

Fiona then sits down and asks herself if her deal-breaker list is actually realistic. Could the man she's with (or the man she wants to be with) actually fulfill this stuff, or would she be throwing out a good relationship with the bathwater?

I think there are actually two HUGE problem areas in Fiona's deal-breaker list. . .

The LYING one. And the PORN one.

The lying one actually isn't too bad, but it's not specific enough. Listen, we're human, and humans lie. We lie to people we love. We lie to people we hate. We lie to ourselves (a lot).

If Fiona wants to have lying on her deal-breaker list, she needs to make it specific and say:

"Lying about the important things. BECAUSE I need to know where you're really at in your life. And I promise not to overreact when you tell me the truth."

And then actually define what the important stuff is.

The porn deal breaker is also problematic because. . . well, because pretty much all guys on this planet watch porn.

Step 3: Pare your list down to the three REAL deal breakers (plus the abuse ones, because you should never put up with that).

This is the hard part, because it means giving up a few things that you think are deal breakers now.

Fiona looks at her list. She ends up taking the porn one off the list because it's unrealistic. She adjusts the lying one.

Note that just because something isn't on your deal breaker list doesn't mean it's not important. It just means it's not a "live and die" item.

She keeps the KIDS item because it really is fundamental to who she is and who she wants to be. She NEEDS to be a mom to be happy.

She COMBINES the "drugs and alcohol" and "getting fat" items into "Taking care of yourself and loving you as much as I love you BECAUSE I need to be with someone who is striving for happiness and is truly motivated. That means taking care of your body, taking care of your mind, and staying healthy for me and for our future family."

That means she only has one slot left.

She thinks long and hard about this one, but ultimately decides to drop the cheating item from her list because "Lying about the important stuff"

is way more important and because she realizes that while she could never be with a serial cheater, she knows life is complicated and sometimes people stray.

Step 4: Sit down with your partner (who's also done this exercise) and go over your deal breakers together.

Next, Fiona sits down with her boyfriend Ben and they go through their deal breakers together.

She explains in plain language how important it is to her to have kids.

How important it is to her to be with someone who takes care of themselves.

To be with someone who is open and honest about the important things, even if he thinks it's going to hurt her.

And she also talks about how she would NEVER put up with physical or emotional abuse.

Ben then lays out his own deal breakers.

His are...

1. Constant, hurtful criticism BECAUSE he wants to be with a woman who loves him for him and isn't trying to form him into something he can't be.
2. Staying in shape BECAUSE even though it might be shallow, it's important to him to have an attractive woman on his arm, and he never wants to find himself not being attracted to her.
3. Kids BECAUSE he really wants to be a dad.

(Plus the abuse stuff.)

They also discuss the stuff that almost made the list.

Scary, huh? But you'll be amazed at how just getting this stuff out there makes it SO much easier to have a good relationship.

The key is that you have to be both HONEST ("yes, it would be hard for me to stick around if you got fat") and realistic (Ben didn't put down, "I need a woman who desperately wants me to sleep with other women").

And, of course, you revisit your deal breaker list once a year. It'll change.

How To Fight-Proof Your Relationship

OK, now it's time to get to the more step-by-step stuff. Yes, I'm going to give you SOME stuff you can use when a fight starts to keep it from becoming something awful. But most of what you're going to get in this section is way more about fight PREVENTION than it is about what to do when a fight actually happens.

In fact, it's basically Fight Inoculation.

(And no, inoculations don't cause autism. Jenny McCarthy is a horrible person who has unknowingly caused the deaths of quite a few kids, and she should be ashamed of herself for her anti-science ranting. It bothers me. Obviously.)

So how do you keep your relationship from becoming a war zone. . .

1. Forgive them for being human. Forgive yourself, too

OK, a quick story for you.

A married couple walks into a therapist's office for their first session (let's call them Bob and Carol).

They're in their mid-50s. They've been married for 25 years. They've had a couple of kids who are in college.

And it really seems like Bob hates Carol.

See, as soon as they sit down on the couch, Bob gets fire in his eyes and starts complaining about Carol. . .

"She's gotten fat," he snarls (ignoring his own beer gut).

"She needs to get a better job and make more money," he says while stomping his cheap shoes on the carpet.

And he goes on and on from there.

"She needs to be nicer. She needs to put more time into her appearance. She needs to be more adventurous in bed. She needs to be better, better, better!"

He goes on for 15 minutes. His face gets red and puffy. He barely takes a breath.

And the whole time, Carol just sits there with her hands folded in her lap. She's as still as a frightened bird. She doesn't say a thing.

Finally, Bob winds down, and they both look at the therapist expectantly.

The therapist is new. It's one of his first cases.

His palms start sweating. He has no idea what to say.

And then finally (after what feels like an hour), he says:

"Bob, if Carol was this amazing, astonishing woman, if she had the body of Claudia Schiffer and the brains of Albert Einstein and the bank account of Bill Gates..."

If she was the perfect lover, the perfect wife, the perfect mom, the perfect woman...

If she was EVERYTHING you've been ranting about about...

If she was 110% AMAZING...

Then what the HELL would she want with a schlub like you?"

Silence.

Bob blanches white. His jaw drops.

Carol falls to the floor laughing like a maniac.

And the doctor thinks he might just be on to something.

OK, why am I telling you this story?

For a couple reasons, actually:

1. Because I think it's an awesome story. =-)

(The above is a paraphrased-from-memory version of a story in Dr. Frederic Luskin's book *Forgive for Love*.

2. I get emails every day from men and women talking about how much happier they'd be if their spouse or the man/woman in their life would just CHANGE.

But you know what?

At a certain point, people really do stop changing.

In fact, after 30 or so we just keep becoming more and more who we already are.

Now that doesn't mean we can't change some behavior or some relatively minor things about ourselves.

We can gain weight or lose weight. We can practice meditation to get more patient. We can learn tantric sex tricks.

But at that point, we're basically, fundamentally who we are (and on our way to becoming even more so).

And the key to becoming HAPPY and having a GREAT relationship is to:

- A. Forgive your PARTNER for being human (and therefore flawed and irrational and crazy. . .)
- B. Forgive YOURSELF for being human (and therefore flawed and irrational and crazy.)

"But Mike," you might be saying, "He doesn't DESERVE my forgiveness. He hurt me SO much by making out with that girl at that party!!"

Or "Mike," you might grunt, "I don't WANT to forgive her. She #\$\$ed up when she forgot to come to that big dinner, and I LOVE the power I have over her, making her walk on eggshells to make up for it."

Suck it up, kids. Forgiveness isn't about forgetting. And it's not about condoning what somebody else did either. Forgiveness is about releasing yourself from the POWER that other person has over you.

As long as you're holding a grudge over somebody and demanding they apologize or fantasizing about revenge, you're giving them INCREDIBLE power over you. And only by truly forgiving them – saying to yourself that you're not angry at them and letting it go – do you have any chance of moving on and being happy.

2. Focus on the positive (what do you LIKE about your partner?)

I have a program called *Text The Romance Back* that I went on TV for a couple years ago. It's a fun program. It teaches you how to use text messages to bring all that lovely fun romance back into your life.

And the VERY FIRST types of texts I talk about in that program are called Appreciation Texts.

They're actually pretty simple. You just (randomly, out of nowhere) send the man or woman in your life texts telling them what you truly, undoubtedly LIKE or LOVE about them.

And they're like nuclear-powered magic crack.

I mean, seriously. I get emails every day from men and women saying just sending a couple simple appreciation texts painted wide joker-like smiles on formerly dour faces and had them mashing their bodies together like some weird Picasso painting.

The fact is, it's WAY too easy to take your partner for granted... to fall into a pattern of "of course you know I love you." To only ever talk to your partner about what you DON'T like and what you want them to CHANGE.

So here's what I want you to do...

Step 1: List out EXACTLY what you really LOVE about your partner. No equivocating. No "I love her body, but I wish she would lose five pounds." No "He's really kind, but I wish he was more ambitious."

Just list out what you REALLY like about him or her. Be exhausting. Be specific.

Step 2: Next time you tell your partner "I love you," turn it into "I love you because..." and fill in the blanks.

"I love you because you're such a damned good dad."

"I love you because of the way you smile at me."

"I love you because you have the greatest ass in three states and four territories."

“I love you because I always feel safe around you.”

Whatever. Try it. Do it. See what happens.

Make this a DAILY practice. Every day, tell your partner what you LOVE or LIKE about them. Have fun with it. Get goofy with it.

And realize that it's like building a love bank. Every time you put appreciation into your relationship, you're earning interest that's going to keep you from ripping out each other's throats later.

What I really like about this exercise is that it solves one of the BIGGEST problems in relationships in the first place.

If you APPRECIATE your partner this way it helps them. . .

- Know how you FEEL about them (No more “Do you really love me?”)
- Know you RESPECT THEM (which is REALLY important for guys. Actually, ladies, make sure you give him appreciation about his PASSIONS - his job, music, books, guns, stupid pro wrestling, whatever.)

3. ALWAYS have your partner's back (even when they're “wrong”)

Fiona stormed in with fire in her eyes. . .

“My boss is such an ASSHOLE. I can't BELIEVE he made me work late tonight just because the Barringer report had a couple typos. Ugh. I'm so fucking MAD.”

OK, let's pretend we're Fiona's husband James here for a second.

James is a business owner. James TOTALLY understands why Fiona's boss made her work late.

James has two options:

Option 1: He can say, “Well, the report HAD to be done right, honey. This is the whole company's reputation on the line. Stop being a brat.”

OR

Option 2: He can say, “Yeah, he’s a total fucking prick. Come here and let me give you a hug and get you bath.”

Which one is “right?”

I know, I know, you want your partner to be more rational and evolve and blah blah. But that’s not your job. Your job as somebody’s husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend is to ALWAYS have their back, at least in the moment.

If your girlfriend comes home ranting about their asshole boss, then their boss is an asshole.

It’s really not that complicated. If your partner KNOWS you’re going to take their side (and you should ALWAYS take their side) a lot of the tension and BS just flows out of the relationship.

Tangentially: Don’t always try to fix things. . . (men do this all the time)

Quick story:

A couple years back, I came home on the warpath. I’d had a real estate deal go wrong and it was going to cost me a bunch of money. I was on a tear. I was mad. I was seeing red. My girlfriend was in the kitchen cooking, and after I spat and clawed and raged for a minute she looked at me and said. . .

“Well, do you want to bitch about it or do you want to fix it?”

And in my WHINIEST voice I said, “I want to bitch about it, dammit!!!”

It’s not your job to make your partner happy. It’s not your job to fix what’s wrong in their life. It’s your job to be on their side and to be supportive. Which is actually way easier.

4. Brutal Honesty Dates

Like I said at the beginning of this program, this is called “Never Fight Again,” not “Never Disagree Again.”

Undoubtedly there’s going to be stuff that comes up in your relationship that bothers you. What a lot of couples do is bury this stuff under the carpet. They pretend everything is fine day in and day out. They tell each other they’re perfect.

And then one day the bombs come out. The stress builds up enough that they just can’t take it anymore. They lash out with lasers and vicious words and somebody ends up sleeping on the couch and somebody else ends up with a new tattoo.

I’m not a fan of that.

What I’m a fan of instead are what I call “Brutal Honesty Dates.”

And Brutal Honesty Dates are just what they sound like. They’re dates that you actually **SCHEDULE** ahead of time where you each get to vent about what you’re not happy about in the relationship.

I know, I know, you just felt ice go down to your sphincter at the idea of actually telling your boyfriend or girlfriend (or husband or wife) that things aren’t **PERFECT**. They’re going to **FREAK OUT**.

But they probably won’t. And even if they do, do it anyway. Because the alternative is worse. The alternative will give you a heart attack and make you buy a divorce lawyer a new Ferrari.

And if you bring up problems in a kind and compassionate (and sober) manner, the odds of it turning into some crazy fight that sends your kids to therapy for 15 years go way down.

So here’s what you actually do...

- A. Have your partner read this program (way easier than trying to explain everything yourself, right?)
- B. Set a time when you’ve got at least an hour or two for just the two of you together to hang out in a private place and talk. (NOTE: My good friend Claire Casey actually recommended doing these dates in a **PUBLIC** place where you can have a serious conversation without fear of being attacked or the other person blowing up. It’s up to you which way you want to go.)

- C. Never break a brutal honesty date unless somebody is bleeding and has to go to the hospital.
- D. When the date starts, take turns talking about the relationship, what you like, what you don't like, what you're happy about, what you're not happy about, etc.

Here are the rules:

1. Sit close together during the conversation. I recommend actually cuddling on the couch or something to that effect. The reason for this is to maintain connection and to keep your body language from seizing up or getting defensive.
2. Criticize the action or the situation that's bothering you or that you want to change, not the actual person you love.

For example: "It really bothers me that you bought that iPad when we can't afford it and when we're trying to save money" is better than "Why are you such an idiot with money???"

This is really important because the moment you **ATTACK** your partner you turn this from a honest conversation to a **FIGHT** (and that's the last thing we want).

3. Use the Fight Translator above to talk about **WHY** it bothers you. "I feel like you don't respect me when we talk about what to do with our money and then you buy a toy with it."
4. When criticizing your partner, use the "criticism sandwich." This is a really simple technique where you start with **PRAISE** for your partner and talking about what you're happy about, then go into the criticism, then go back to praise.

For instance. . .

"Things have been really good the last few months. I love that you've started calling me when you're going to be late coming home from work and that we have these conversations more. The biggest thing that's bothering me right now is money stuff. I know you really wanted that iPad mini, but we're on a budget and you bought it without talking to me and I got really mad. But I also feel like you deserve to get fun stuff sometimes."

5. No interrupting your partner when they're talking, no getting defensive or taking what they say as a personal attack. (Yes, it's criticism, and a lot of us have a hard time taking criticism, but suck it up. You're an adult.)
6. Take turns going back and forth and going through the different problem topics in your relationship. These topics are going to be different for every couple, but here's some to start with:
 - The day-to-day relationship – How do you both feel about the day to day of your relationship? What are you happy about, what are you not happy about?
 - Money – How is money causing friction in your relationship?
 - Sex – Good? Bad? Ugly?
 - Other men/women – Jealousy issues. Is one of you being disrespectful? Is one of you overreacting?
 - Kids – Child-rearing strategies. Who's in charge of what? What do you want to see change?
 - The future – What goals do you have for your relationship? How do you feel about the future RIGHT NOW? (Say it with love. There is no forever.)

Actually, this is REALLY important. You NEED to sit down and have a straight up conversation about where you both THINK you're going and where you WANT to go.

I got an email the other day from a woman who was INCREDIBLY bitter that she'd waited for a proposal from a guy for SEVEN YEARS and never got it. When I asked her if she'd ever flat out TOLD him how important it was to her to get married some day she said, "Well, no! He should KNOW that. I mean EVERYBODY wants that."

She dug her own grave on that one.

I recommend you have your topics listed out BEFORE the conversation.

7. An important point here is that you are NOT trying to resolve anything, here. You're just having a conversation and being honest about who you are and where you both are together. Is this a journey you want to keep taking? Are there things you want to work on? What's REALLY working for you? What's REALLY not working for you?
8. It's just as important to keep your tone low and reasonable and to avoid escalating into a fight.
9. No matter what, it's important you end your Brutal Honesty Date on a high note. You can either end it by listing out the reasons you love each other, by making out, by having sex, or any combination of the above. But do it.

Scary, huh? But effective.

Personally, my girlfriend and I do these dates every three months or so and use them as a way to reorient our relationship and keep us both from getting complacent.

5. When shit hits the fan

Of course, no matter how much you inoculate your relationship, there are going to be times STUFF happens and you're going to get triggered into a murderous rage or feel like you want to drown in tears.

Maybe somebody will cheat (cheating sucks, but it doesn't HAVE TO kill your relationship).

Maybe you'll find out you were lied to.

Maybe you'll find out your partner is some kind of alien superhero.

Whatever. Stuff is going to happen. If you followed the rest of the steps and principals in this program, you'll hopefully be able to...

1. Realize that your partner's actions aren't REALLY about you and are almost never done to directly hurt you. Yes, your partner is going to do things that drive you nuts, cause you to feel sick, make you want to call your mother and cry and generally cause nausea.

2. Realize that just because you FEEL something doesn't mean you have to act on it or lash out about it. This is actually huge. The heat of the moment (when you found out your wife drunkenly made out with some guy at a bar or that your husband spent \$2,000 on a guitar when you're struggling to make rent) is the WORST time to actually get into it and discuss a problem. Yelling never really solves anything. Insults never solve anything. And throwing stuff (or hands) is just a great way to ruin whatever love you have left.
3. Take a deep breath. Remind yourself about what you love about your partner (no matter how hard it might be). Use the Fight Translator to figure out why you're REALLY angry and what you're really ready to go to war about.
4. And then set up time where you can sit down and talk about the issue. It's harder to be an adult. It's harder to focus on love and what you like about your partner when you feel like they're disrespecting you. But if you're in this for the long haul, it's all you can do.

Conclusion

And there we go. I want to thank you so much for going on this journey with me and helping me develop this material. I'd love to hear your thoughts on *Never Fight Again* and what I can do to improve it in the future. Please send your comments to reviews@digitalromanceinc.com. I promise I will read them.

Two Additional Pieces

Just as a bonus, here's two other short pieces I wrote that I think are pertinent to this topic and conversation.

First is an article I wrote for my weekly newsletter called "How To Talk To A Man Without Starting A Fight." (If you'd like, you can subscribe to the newsletter by going to <http://www.digitalromanceinc.com>.)

Second is a VERY personal piece I wrote for a friend's online magazine. Honestly, it makes me damned uncomfortable sharing this, but how can I ask you to do the work unless I show you that I've done it myself first?

Fight-proof your relationship

Hey, it's Mike Fiore. . . And in this section I'm going to tell you how to "Fight-Proof" your relationship with a man so you never fall into stupid fights and anxiety and anger again. . .

Sarah asks:

"I want to talk to my boyfriend about how he is suddenly treating me or not treating me. According to the 'how to tell if he really loves you' he does love me. He does all of the steps except actually saying the words that he loves me.

"He still makes plan for the future with me.

"However lately he doesn't seem to care about what I want or how I feel, and our conversations and time together seems strained. I want to ask him what is going on with him but I'm afraid it will drive a bigger wedge between us. Is he loses the feelings he felt for me, or is it a phase.

How do I start the conversation of how I feel and what I need from him in return, and where we are going as a couple since he doesn't mention that anymore?"

Hey Sarah, Thanks so much for your question and honestly, congratulations.

By using our little “Does He Really Love You” tool, you get to address the problems in your relationship from a realistic place instead of from a place of anxiety.

Now let’s dig into your question by breaking it down into a couple parts:

Part 1: How to get a guy to do what you want without starting a fight...

Let me tell you a story about a trip to Mexico I took recently.

A couple weeks back my (awesome) girlfriend and I took a trip down to Cancun for a “business trip.” (It was a lot of fun.) And while we were there, we got into a little fight. And the reason we got into a little fight was because she hit me with a stick when she should have offered me a carrot. See, we were in a bar in Cancun with a bunch of other folks from the conference when

I glanced over and saw my girlfriend in conversation with a guy.

In the past, we’ve had a small problem because she feels like whenever I see her talking to a guy I come over and “mark my territory” by wrapping my arms around her or otherwise making it VERY clear that she’s MY woman when she’s just having an innocent conversation. (Personally, when I was single I always appreciated it when guys let me know a girl was taken, but whatever.) Anyway, this time I glanced over, saw she was talking to a guy and very specifically did NOT go over and interrupt or interject into their conversation in any way.

I was pretty proud of myself. Until five minutes later, when she came over and all hell broke loose.

See, my (awesome) girlfriend came over and said, “Mike, I really need you to not do that thing you do where you get all lovey on me when I’m talking to someone.”

And all of a sudden I got mad. Because I DIDN’T do that thing and I was getting “yelled at” for it anyway.

What my girlfriend SHOULD have done was come over to me and say, “Hey, thank you so much for not coming over and getting all handsy on me while I was talking to that guy about business stuff. You’re awesome. I love you.”

In other words, she should have used POSITIVE reinforcement instead of NEGATIVE criticism.

And this can apply to your situation too. If you go to your guy from a place of anger, pain and criticism it's going to put him on the defensive and make him "blow up" the way I kind of did.

But if you go to him praising him for whatever little thing he's doing right, it gives you a chance to broach the topic in a less confrontational way.

So...

Bad: "I feel like you're ignoring me!!"

Good: "It's really great knowing how much you love me."

But then that brings us to the second part of your question:

Part 2: Is he losing feelings for you or is it a phase?

Well, I don't know.

And neither do you.

And neither does he. In any relationship there's going to be ebbs and flows in the feelings you have for each other.

There's going to be days you wake up INCREDIBLY in love and obsessed with your man.

And there's going to be days you wish you could replace him with an animatronic teddy bear.

And the same goes for him. But here's a few principles:

- A. What he's going through probably has very little to do with you or how he feels about you at all. (He's obviously got something on his mind.)
- B. He's "going internal" because a lot of guys simply don't know how to share their feelings or are afraid of being judged. So what do you do? For now I'd recommend something along the lines of making him a little card that says...

"Seems like you've been going through something lately. Just wanted to let you know how much I love you no matter what it is."

In other words, show support without "prying." If that doesn't work, you'll need to bring out the big guns and flat out tell him "I know you love me, but I really need you to talk to me."

It might blow up in your face, but at least you'll get somewhere.

Best,

Mike

Flipping the switch: From self-loathing to massive happiness in one simple step

I was sitting on a beach in Mexico when it hit me how much I hated myself.

Which kind of sucked.

Because I should have been happy.

I should have been ecstatic.

After years of struggle and poverty and horrible, horrible physical pain (Note: Getting hit by a semi truck sucks), I finally had it. I finally had everything I ever thought I wanted.

I was 30 years old, I was in good shape. I had friends, professional success, fun toys, plenty of free time, and a collection of ridiculous hats totally appropriate for a man with no hair. . .

Even better, I was one of only two guys on a yoga retreat to Sayulita and was spending my days stretching and snorkeling and surfing and chugging margaritas with a bevy of beautiful, intelligent, passionate (and flexible) women.

I should have been happy. I should have been doing a victory lap around the mess that was my twenties and crowing to the moon about how I finally made it past childhood trauma and adulthood disappointment to become a success.

But I just couldn't do it.

Nope. Instead of being happy, I was miserable. Angry. Emotionally nauseous and—worse yet—viciously angry at myself for not waking up to how good I had it.

One night, I found myself sitting on a log alone watching the waves come in. Everyone else had gone on to a bar to order large amounts of booze in broken Spanish, but the bile in my throat and the voice in the back of my head wanted me to be alone.

Alone and vulnerable.

It was pitch black but for the shine of the moon off the water, and all I could feel was the bottle in my hand, the bourbon in my gut, and the tension in my jaw threatening to crack my teeth.

I'm man enough to admit it I had tears in my eyes.

"Why?" I thought to myself in a silent whisper. "What the hell is wrong with me? Why can't I just enjoy this?"

It was a rhetorical question, so I was pretty shocked when I got an answer. It came in a voice as dark as tar and as toxic as poison.

"Because you don't deserve it," the voice in the back of my head grumbled. "Because, Mike, you're evil and dangerous and anyone stupid enough to love you deserves to be hurt."

I closed my eyes and I could finally see it: what I really thought of myself. Not a man or even a boy, but a creature with claws and teeth and a cruel, cruel grin. A creature whose only glee came from clawing at my heart and pulling me down and reminding me to never, ever feel even one moment of joy.

I flew home a few days later feeling like I'd gotten into a fist fight with Godzilla (Godzilla won). The whole flight home, my brain stormed and I counted down the hours until I could go see my therapist.

"How are you?" she asked as I walked in the room, her eyes half squinting as she searched my face.

For an hour I let the words flow out like a dying breath, rambling at Speedy-Gonzalez pace, desperate to get every hatred and criticism and imagined crime out of my heart and into the world.

And finally, after minutes that felt like days, I looked my therapist in the eyes and said:

"I'm so sick and tired of hating myself and beating myself up and punishing everyone around me, and I'm wondering what would happen if I just decided to stop and actually LIKE myself for a little while, instead."

And my therapist (who's awesome and is now a championship lawn bowler - just a side detail) looked at me with kind eyes and a half smile and said, "Well, that would be interesting, wouldn't it?"

And so I did.

Right then and there I decided to try liking myself - maybe even loving myself - for a while.

And at first the creature in my head and my heart raged like an angry lion and dragged its claws against the inside of my skull.

But instead of fighting I did something kind of weird.

I pointed and laughed.

I dressed it up in clown shoes and ugly makeup and mocked my self-loathing like I'd mock Jerry Bruckheimer if I saw him doing chainsaw ballet.

And suddenly a weird thing happened. Suddenly I felt this glowing freedom rising in my chest and this crazy, irrational smile pulling hard at the corners of my mouth.

Suddenly I felt... happy. Joyful. Ecstatic.

For the next two weeks, I walked around on a love high. My friends asked me what the heck had happened, my enemies got confused when I was actually nice to them. And that beast in the back of my brain shrunk and shriveled and wasted and cried.

Of course, it wasn't exactly as easy as that. Every time I'd fail at something or feel ashamed about something or feel like some woman was getting close, I'd feel that creature kick. I'd feel that bile on my tongue.

But now... years later... here I am with nothing to cage and nothing to burn.

A string of broken relationships turned into one amazing love with the girl of my dreams. And years and years of anger and pain turned into...

Something simpler. Nicer. More wonderful.

I'm not into the "woo woo" stuff a lot of my friends are, but I am into this one simple fact:

Happiness is a choice. Liking yourself (loving yourself) is something you choose to do. And no one can make you miserable or happy but you.

Thanks.

-Mike Fiore