

# COUPLES “RULES OF ENGAGEMENT”

By Joy Eidse

- No name calling
- No swearing at each other
- No sarcasm
- No interrupting
- No sneaking into the other person's social media/phone, etc. to 'catch them at something'
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- No lying, even if you think the truth will make the other person mad
- Work on controlling your own anger to avoid breaking things, punching walls, etc.
- Do not ever threaten physical harm
- Do not ever hit, push, punch, throw things at, shove, kick or otherwise make aggressive physical contact with the other person.
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- Let the other person know if you need a break and when you feel you could re-engage in the issue
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- No threatening to leave/divorce unless you actually intend to do this.
- Try not to undermine the other person's stated experience, emotions or perspective.
- Avoid generalizations
- Try to communicate emotional needs rather than blaming
- Take ownership of your feelings, no one can *make* you feel something
- Try to give the other person the benefit of the doubt, that they are not out to harm you.
- Do not engage if you are wishing to harm the other person, emotionally or otherwise.
- Try to stay curious about the other person's stated experience, emotions or perspectives instead of judging them.
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- When listening, listen, don't spend your time trying to think of a rebuttal.
- Try to speak gently
- Give the other person your full attention
- Do apologize if you've done something wrong, but ensure you are fully aware of the impact of your actions on the other person before apologizing, so you know what it is you are apologizing for.