



Fight Fairly!

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Your brain has two sides, each with specific tasks to perform. The right-hand side has a very small region called the amygdala which does many things including producing emotional reactions. The left-hand side of the brain is primarily for problem solving. Between the two is the Corpus Callosum which is like a bridge that connects the two sides.

Unfortunately, many people tend to stay on the right side of the brain and are so emotionally that they are unable to easily problem-solve. The Corpus Callosum does not strengthen because there is little traffic back and forth and so emotional reactions tend to flourish and problem-solving ability diminishes.

When you are involved in a difficult situation or having an argument with another person, there are specific things that you can do to resolve issues effectively:

1. Remember that conflict is part of life - Holding different ideas is not a bad thing. In fact, if everyone thought the same way, life would be pretty boring! Think about how differing opinions can lead to positive change.
2. Focus on the issue - It is easy to get off track but important to stick with the topic in dispute. It is helpful if each of you writes down one sentence on a piece of paper that clearly states the issue. Then stick to the issue during your discussion.
3. Get all the information - Listen to the other person and make sure that you have all the information necessary to make a good decision. This might involve having to do some research before carrying on the conversation.
4. Stay in the present - It doesn't help to bring up things from the past and quite likely will make things even worse.
5. Take a break - When things are calm, make an agreement that during any heated debate you can make the time-out signal with your hands to indicate that you need to calm down. Walk around the block and come back within 15 minutes so the other person doesn't worry about you.
6. Never attack the person with words or actions - Physical abuse is never appropriate. Over the years I have heard clients state, however, that the physical abuse ended but the verbal and mental abuse was burned into their souls.
7. Look for common interests - Identify the things that you both want and then focus on how you can work together so that these interests are protected and enhanced.
8. Employ sleep - Fatigue can negatively distort perception so sometimes it is better to deal with problems or differences after you have had a good rest.
9. Keep things private - Do not spread gossip about your disagreement or try to solicit support from others (especially children) unless you both agree to meet with a professional who can help you resolve issues.
10. Admit when you are wrong - Sometimes it is best to apologize even for the part that you played in escalating the situation.