

## Week 14

### Two Types of Fights - Solvable and Perpetual

Solvable problems have solutions and can be fixed. Perpetual problems, on the other hand, will remain with us during the life of our marriage. Astonishingly, 69% of our marital conflicts are perpetual!

The follow-up question is often asked, “If 69% of our problems can’t be fixed, how does anyone have a happy marriage?” The answer is that those who succeed at marriage learn to manage their perpetual problems. How do they accomplish that? The goal becomes not to fix the problem, but to live well with the points of conflict, accept that they exist, and approach them with compassion and curiosity instead of defensiveness and criticism.

What does that look like? We will examine that in great detail in the coming weeks. First, let’s pivot to look at what happens when fights go wrong. The common denominator in fights that go off the rails is that we dismiss our spouse’s negative emotions. The reflexive response to strong emotions is usually to minimize, invalidate, or totally dismiss their feelings. However, **if we don’t listen to our spouse’s emotions without defensiveness, the fight will escalate, and damage will be done to the marriage.** When underlying causes are not addressed, perpetual problems drive a wedge between mates. When this is repeated, we enter “gridlock.”

Next week: What Is Gridlock, And How Do We Escape It?