

Week 19

Five Fights That Everyone Has - Fight #1

Conflict Mistake #1: The Harsh Start-up.

Traits of a harsh start-up:

1. It begins with criticism.
2. We describe our spouse instead of ourselves.
3. We pile on other resentments we have been hoarding. This is called “kitchen-sinking.”

Trait #1: We criticize.

Criticism is never productive. The difference between criticism and a productive complaint is that criticism takes the form of an attack on the spouse’s core character or personality. Instead of pointing out a problem with the situation, we point out a problem with who they are as a person.

Trait #2: We describe our spouse instead of ourselves.

We tend to start a conflict with an assumption that everything we do makes sense, and everything our spouse does is wrong. “You always” and “you never” statements are classic examples of this trait. Why are they non-productive? They imply that there is a flaw in our spouse’s personality.

Trait #3: “Kitchen-sinking”

We don’t just focus on the one current issue. We tend to think, as long as we’re fighting, here’s the complete laundry list of things I’m upset about. However, kitchen-sinking never leads to effective conflict resolution. Instead of one problem to solve, we have a whole pile of problems to face.

The moral of the story is: Don’t store up complaints and resentments; process them as they take place.

Next week: Factors That Lead to a Harsh Start-Up