

Ground Rules for Divorce

By: Bill Ferguson

Bill Ferguson, founder of Divorce As Friends, a court approved program for divorcing parents and author of the best selling book, How To Heal A Painful Relationship, has developed a list of behavioral guidelines to help divorcing parties decrease conflict during the divorce process. What follows is a summary of those guidelines. For a more detailed explanation of the process, see the article How To Take Conflict Out of Divorce.

Section 1: Ground Rules for Divorce-

How you act towards the other person determines how that person will act towards you.

When you are critical, controlling or take sides against someone, that person will get upset, put up his or her walls of protection, and automatically become critical towards you. Then you will get upset and become more critical of him or her. Then the other person will become more critical of you.

Without knowing, you create a cycle of conflict, a cycle of hurting, attacking and withdrawing from each other. It's this cycle of conflict that creates all the suffering in our relationships. Fortunately, it takes two people to create and maintain this cycle. It only takes one person to end it. To end the cycle of conflict, you need to stop fueling it.

Accept the person When you fight the way someone is, you get upset and fuel the cycle of conflict. Accepting may seem difficult, but it's nothing more than telling the truth. That person is the way he or she is whether you like it or not. As your surrender to the truth, you restore your effectiveness.

Be willing to feel your hurt. Ultimately, all your upsets and all your destructive behavior are fueled by hurt. The more you are willing to feel this hurt, like a child, the more the hurt runs its course and disappears. Take every opportunity feel your hurt. Feel it willingly. Cry as hard as you can. Let the hurt come and let it go.

See your role in the problem. You can't have a cycle of conflict with only one person. It takes two. Notice how critical you have been and how much you have hurt the other person. Notice how the other person has put up his or her walls of protection and given it back to you. See how your actions have fueled the conflict.

Don't hang on. Let the person go. Everything you do to make someone stay destroys love and pushes the person further and further away. We hang on to avoid feeling the hurt. Once you are willing to feel your hurt, the need to hang on disappears. You can then act in a way that creates love.

Let go of resentment. Forgive. Forgiveness is not for the benefit of the other person. It's for you. To forgive, be willing to feel your hurt. Then notice that the other person is doing the best he or she can with his or her very limited ability. Forgive the person for not being wiser and more aware.

Be willing for anything to happen. When you fight what happens, you become full of fear and upset. You lose your ability to see clearly and you act in a way that makes your situation worse. When you flow with what happens, you have peace of mind. You see clearly and can discover what needs to be done.

Don't Argue. Listen. Whenever two people are arguing, there are two people who are trying to force their opinion on the other. Neither one is listening. Once someone stops to listen, the argument ends. Let the other person express his or her opinion fully. Then express yours.

Once everything is said, you can find solutions.

Find solutions that work for both of you. Refuse to draw sides against the other person. When you fight to have your side prevail, you force the other person to fight against you. When you are committed to finding solutions that work for both of you, the resistance against you dissolves. It's hard to fight someone who's on your side.

Take every opportunity to heal your relationship. Every time you interact with the other person, you will either put water on the fire or more fuel. Make sure you always add water. Do everything you can to empower the person. Make sure the other person feels accepted and appreciated. Be a friend and be interested in that person's well being.

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This material is taken from Divorce As Friends, a court approved program for divorcing parents. For more information, call 713-520- 5370 or visit www.divorceasfriends.com.