

CAN THIS BE LOVE?

WHY FIGHT? 21 ways to win without a battle

Suppose that you and your partner are on the brink of a fight, perhaps because he has been flirting with just about every female who resides within your postal-code zone. Before you turn your home into a battlefield, consider the possibility that fighting may not be the most productive way to settle a dispute, or the most satisfying way to right a wrong. There may be other ways to release your angry energy more profitably—and more instructively for your partner. Consider, for example, the following alternatives:

1. Give your apartment a good straightening, making sure to rearrange your partner's seven years of tax receipts from chronological order to the more logical alphabetical order.
2. Rent a cassette of the movie *An Unmar-*

ried Woman, in which the straying husband winds up lonely and miserable and wearing a wrinkled raincoat.

3. Call his mother for a chat about this and that, and specifically about how he really *wasn't* out of the country last year on her birthday.
4. Arrange for him to spend an evening with you and your girlfriend, the one who's involved in a movement to siphon hormones from men who hit their wives.
5. Get together all the superfluous clothing in your home for an immediate charity pick-up, not forgetting to include all of your partner's ripped or yellowed jockey shorts, even if this means that he is left with none in his drawer.
6. Cook a dinner especially designed for people with hyperactive sex glands. (To do this correctly, you'll need to buy a copy of the medical cookbook, *Gland Food, Bland Food*.)
7. Go out and get that new haircut you've been wanting but put off because of your partner's childish attachment to your long hair. Perhaps you could try the one hairdressers are calling "The Chihuahua," after

the Mexican shorthair of the same name.

8. Creatively rearrange the furniture in your home, discounting your partner's paranoid insistence that the spot you have in mind for the easy chair is directly in the path of his nighttime route to the bathroom.
9. Enlarge, frame and prominently display the photograph you took of your partner at the very moment his legs buckled beneath him during the local Boy's Club marathon.
10. Invite his boss to dinner, but say you'll have to confirm the invitation at the last minute, since it's contingent on whether or not your partner is sober that night.
11. Go to a medical library and pick him up a textbook that discusses the link between promiscuity and the early onset of incontinence.
12. Call your parents and wangle an invitation for you and your partner to spend New Year's Eve with them and three other couples in their high blood pressure prevention group.
13. Contribute an item to his college alumni newsletter suggesting that he may be the first of his graduating class with a seven-inch part in his hair.
14. Reallocate all the closet space in your home, hanging the sheets and towels in his closet and folding all his suits on the shelves in the linen closet.
15. Allow him to experience for a week what living alone is like. Eat all your meals out, sleep on the exercise mat and generally behave as if English were not your native tongue.
16. Procure front-row seats to an important football game, show them to your partner and then tell him you are donating them to a charity auction.
17. Clean out your refrigerator, replacing all the beer with bottles of sparkling water, the salami with soy patties, and the brownies with sugar-free carob cupcakes. If your partner complains, remind him that "You are what you eat, Lardo."
18. Join a holistic health group that, among other things, requires you to sleep in a room no warmer than fifty degrees and maintain complete sexual abstinence twenty-seven days out of every month.
19. Send him an anonymous chain letter requiring that the recipient mail handwritten copies to twenty other people or risk a large financial setback.
20. Get him a reservation for the seven-day, all-male monastic retreat sponsored by a local church group.
21. Present him with a nonrefundable bus pass that allows him to see thirty states in thirty days for the incredibly low price of \$39.95.

Now, isn't that more fun than yelling?

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by Bette-Jane Raphael