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STEVER

ROBBINS:

Stever Robbins here. Welcome to the *Get It Done Guy's Quick and Dirty Tips to Work Less and Do More*. Today's topic is streamlining your relationship conflicts. It's the easiest way to access your PC from any location, and it's built for a non-technical person so anyone can use it. Try it free for 30 days at gotomypc.com/podcast.

One of the wonderful things about having a snuggle bunny is the snuggling. And one of the best things about fighting with your snuggle bunny is making up from the fight because then you get to snuggle. Ever in the mood to snuggle, but your bunny doesn't want to? I'll bet you get into a fight over it. And then you make up, and you snuggle, so everything's great, except, of course, for the fight.

Fighting takes a long time. It's tiring, and it's bad for relationships. So some nice people got together and invented fair fighting. Have you heard of it? Just Google it. You'll find lots of versions. There are rules like take it private, keep it private, so you don't embarrass each other in front of others. Hello. Wouldn't that defeat the point? Or how about avoid accusations or no hitting below the belt. Why go to all the trouble of fighting if you're going to fight fair? Why not fight to win?

I guess the theory is that as long as you're going to fight, you should fight fair. But if you can just decide to fight fair willy-nilly, then why can't you just decide not to fight at all? Because, it's human nature to fight. That's why. At least that's what I say to justify my occasional lack of self-control and infantile behavior. Even if you fight fair 99% of the time, that extra 1% you might say something that's better left unsaid. Nothing destroys a relationship like love ones going straight for each other's insecurities.

So they didn't tell you until after you were married to them that they weren't the gender you thought. Obviously, it's a sensitive issue for them. Bringing it up in a fight about whose turn it is to wash the dishes is not going to win you any brownie points. And, of course, fighting rarely starts small and stays small. Imagine a couple where one person is mainly concerned with tasks, whereas, the other is mainly concerned with relationships and feelings. Just imagine how things might go in a fight.

A fight starts over a task. It's your turn to do the dishes. Is not. Is too. The feeling-centric

person then notices the conflict is generating bad feelings. That upsets them. That's a big problem. You just had to start a fight. Didn't you? You always do this. You take a nice evening and ruin it. You just can't discuss it calmly.

To the task-centric person, that is going off task, which, of course, is a big problem, so they get even more upset about that. You're always changing the subject. What about the dishes? This isn't about the dishes. This is about your inability to be an authentic human being.

Now we have three fights going on. One fight about the dishes. One fight about whose fault the fight is. And a third fight about how the second fight is distracting us from the first fight. Who can keep track? You might try using the grid technique for my episode on managing multiple projects, but that becomes a fourth fight. Why are you writing out a grid? Don't you care about our relationship?

At that point, trying to explain you're writing a grid so that you can track the fights that you need to fix, so you can make up and snuggle just won't work. Yes. There's an easier way. Make a fight sheet. Did my sample fight sound familiar? That's because fights aren't original. Most of us have the same fights as each other, and we have them over and over and over. Even the fights about the fights repeat. This is silly.

If you're going to get hot and bothered with your snuggle bunny doing something repetitive, there are better alternatives. For example, jumping rope. But if you must fight, streamline the process. Create a word processing document and type in your standard arguments, include both points of view, but just how you both say them. Don't cheat to make yourself look better than they are. Record both sides of each argument. Put in a bold header for each argument to make it easy to find and include a table of contents if it helps. Start with the title page, Our Arguments. Now print it out, and make sure you each have a copy.

Next time you start to argue, run, don't walk, to your nearest copy and hand it to the other person. Then you can each turn to the proper page and run through the arguments silently. When you're done, if either of you have anything else to say, say it. Record those additions for next time, of course, and voila, what used to be a two-hour argument, now takes mere moments. You can look at each other, laugh a little bit, and go snuggle and makeup. And yes, I'm serious.

In my life, this tip works. The idea appeared in my head in the middle of an argument when I

realized the argument was really, really familiar, but it was too late to stop it from escalating. I thought sarcastically, "There's got to be a way to streamline this." And then I realized it could be funny to give it a try. My first version was my partner's main points and what my responses would be. That would help me save time in proving I was right. And then I realized that wasn't fair, so I included both points of view.

And it was funny, we only had to use our argument booklet two or three times before almost all of those arguments lost their force. This tip doesn't actually work because you're streamlining your arguments, it works because you're reminding yourselves how silly and futile arguing is in the first place. Life is too short. Go snuggle instead.

This is Stever Robbins. Download a sample fight sheet with this episode's transcript at getitdone.quickanddirtytips.com. You can also stream the Quick and Dirty Tips podcasters to your iPhone with Stitcher at stitcher.com. Email your questions to getitdone@quickanddirtytips.com or leave voicemail at 866-WRK-LESS. Work less. Do more. And have a great life.

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