



# DATE *Night* AT HOME

COME A LITTLE CLOSER, BABY



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WELCOME TO  
YOUR

*at home*

DATE NIGHT!

## ARE YOU SO GOOD AT SOCIAL DISTANCING THAT YOU FEEL DISTANT FROM YOUR LOVE, TOO?

There's nothing like a fun-filled, romantic date night to bring the two of you a little closer. This little handout will guide you through simple games and activities in the comfort of your own home and give you a few extra tips and resources along the way! Use it to deepen your relationship and strengthen your marriage for years to come!

### SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED:



#### A ROMANTIC SPOT WITH A FLAT SURFACE

(CANDLES, PILLOWS, TEA, ETC.)



#### A COIN (QUARTER OR NICKEL WORKS BEST)



#### TWO NOTEBOOKS



#### A PEN



#### COOKIES, CRACKERS (OR OTHER SIMILAR-SHAPED SNACK)



#### A TIMER

## GETTING STARTED

The key to enjoying this date night is actually treating it like a date night! So take a moment to transition. Gather up some blankets, pillows, and candles, set up a romantic space, and give each other a nice back rub and a passionate kiss before getting started with the first activity!

## ACTIVITY 1: COOKIE FACE

### SUPPLIES NEEDED



**COOKIES,  
CRACKERS**  
(OR OTHER SIMILAR  
SHAPED SNACK)



**A TIMER**

The goal of this game is to move the cookie from your forehead to your mouth as quickly as possible. If the cookie falls off, put it back on your forehead and start over! First one to get the cookie in their mouth wins!

### ROUND 1:

1. Set a timer for 30 seconds.
2. Place a regular ol' cookie on your forehead (or any type of cookie-sized treat you enjoy eating).
3. Use your facial muscles to move it down your face and into your mouth—without using your hands.

### ROUND 2:

1. Same setup as round 1, except this time you can use ONE finger to help your spouse get their cookie into their mouth.
2. Set the timer for 30 seconds and start with the cookie on your foreheads.
3. Without dropping the cookie off your own face, use one hand to help your spouse.

## OKAY, SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF THAT?

Some moments have been harder than others in quarantine. There may have even been some days that you just weren't sure how you were going to accomplish anything, or make it to the end, just like this activity. But, when you focus on helping each other, and lending a hand when needed, the obstacle is easier to overcome for both of you.



This same thought process applies to good old-fashioned conflict. When you're in a fight with your spouse, or maybe just a super tense argument, remember that you're on the same team, and teammates help each other out so they can both win.

### KNEE-TO-KNEE

Now turn, facing each other, and spend a few minutes answering these questions:

1. What are some ways I can be a helping hand when we fight?
2. How can we hold each other accountable for keeping the teammate mindset when we're arguing?

GIVE EACH OTHER A

*smooch*

AND LET'S KEEP THIS DATE  
NIGHT GOING!

## ACTIVITY 2: SPIN DOCTOR

### SUPPLIES NEEDED



**A TIMER**



**A FLAT  
SURFACE**

The goal of this game is to stop the coin vertically as many times as possible with just one finger!

### HOW TO PLAY:

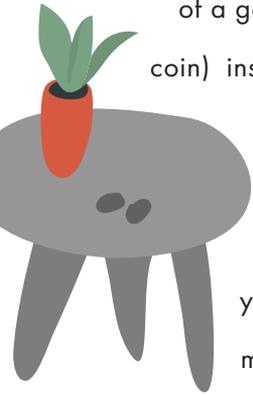
1. Set a timer for 30 seconds.
2. When the timer starts, Player 1 spins a coin on the table.
3. As soon as the coin is spinning, Player 2 tries to stop the coin with one finger by touching its edge. The coin cannot fall over and must be stopped upright!
4. Each time Player 2 stops the coin from spinning, they get a point.
5. Take turns spinning and stopping the coin.
6. The spouse with the most points wins.

## OKAY, SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF THAT?

For many of us, when we're angry or upset about something, it can be hard to control our emotions. It's almost like we're spinning out of control. But the purpose

of a good fight should be to keep your marriage upright (just like this coin) instead of knocking your spouse down. When you're feeling overheated or out of control, pause. Take a deep breath.

*Let your spouse know you need a few minutes to collect yourself and take a walk or go to another room.* This will allow you to calm down a bit and think more clearly. Set a timer for 15 minutes, come back, and try it again.



### KNEE-TO-KNEE

Now turn, facing each other, and spend a few minutes answering these questions:

1. How have you seen me spin out of control? Have you ever felt knocked down in the process?
2. When you're feeling overwhelmed, what stops you from hitting pause?
3. How can we commit to taking a break when it's getting heated without shoving the problem under the rug?

GIVE EACH OTHER A

*smooch*

AND LET'S KEEP THIS DATE NIGHT GOING!

## ACTIVITY 3: SILENT CAPITALS

### SUPPLIES NEEDED



A TIMER



A PIECE OF PAPER



A PEN

The goal of this game is to name as many states and capitals in 90 seconds as you can without any help from your partner!

### HOW TO PLAY:

1. Grab a piece of paper and your pen.
  2. Choose one spouse to be the scribe and one spouse to be the speaker.  
*(The scribe CANNOT talk during this activity and CAN ONLY write things on the paper that the speaker says.)*
- NOTE:** Before we give the instructions for this game, we have to put it out there that we know there is great capacity to cheat... BUT. We are using the honor system. So please, do not use the Googles. Or Bing. Or Yahoo. Or whatever search engine you prefer.
3. When the timer starts, your goal is to get all 50 states and their capitals listed on the paper in 90 seconds.
  4. Scribes, you CAN ONLY write down what the speaker tells you to write. So, no adding extra info to help them out! No HINTS
  5. Start the timer and... GO!

## OKAY, SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF THAT?

When you're in the middle of an argument, it's easy to think about what your rebuttal should be instead of really listening and trying to understand your partner's perspective. At times, this can be frustrating, and it will take some practice.

***Even if you feel like you're right in the argument, it still matters that you listen!*** In the end, would you rather be right or in relationship with your spouse? Ask questions and repeat back what you heard to make sure you fully understand their perspective.

Focus on what your honey needs from you in the moment. Remember, it's not about who wins the argument, it's about whether or not your marriage wins. You're going to have fights. It's all about defining a good, healthy process to help you fight well and build each other up in the process.



### KNEE-TO-KNEE

Now turn, facing each other, and spend a few minutes answering these questions:

1. What are some things I can do to help you feel heard and listened to?
2. What are some ways we can hold each other accountable to being better listeners during arguments?
3. When you don't listen to me, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ .

GIVE EACH OTHER A

*smooch*

AND LET'S KEEP THIS DATE  
NIGHT GOING!

## ACTIVITY 4: HIDDEN ANIMAL

### SUPPLIES NEEDED



A PIECE OF PAPER



A PEN

### HOW TO PLAY:

1. Fold one sheet of paper in half twice, hamburger, not hot dog.
2. Both of you think of an animal, but don't tell your partner.
3. Person 1, draw your animal's feet on the bottom piece of the paper without showing your partner.
4. Fold that portion backwards so it can't be seen, then pass the paper to your significant other.
5. Person 2, draw the legs of your animal in the next section of the paper without showing your partner.
6. Fold the paper backwards so Person 1 cannot see what you drew.
7. Pass the paper back to your spouse. Person 1, draw the body of your animal in the next blank section of the paper, still keeping it hidden from your partner.
8. Fold the paper back so your drawing can't be seen, then hand it back to your partner.
9. Person 2, draw the head of your animal.
10. Now, unfold the paper and see the animal you drew together!

### FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A \$50 AMAZON GIFT CARD...

1. Guess which animal your spouse was drawing.
2. Name your new animal.
3. Take a selfie with your new animal and post about this activity on social media!
4. Tag First Things First on Facebook or @firstthingsfamily on Instagram. We'll randomly choose two lucky couples to win \$50 Amazon Gift cards!

## OKAY, SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF THAT?

Have you ever talked about how you want to fight with your partner? It

sounds absolutely crazy, but if you don't talk about how you are going to handle conflict ahead of time, it can cause the conflict to get pretty messy. When you are in the middle of an argument and each person is trying to paint a different picture with a different end-goal, you can be all over the place and the tension will get even higher.



Imagine doing this activity again, but this time deciding on one animal to draw. It would look a lot more complete, right? When you talk about how you want to work through conflict as a couple, you'll both have the same end-goal in mind. Please know that it still might not be perfect! But at least you are both on the same page.

### KNEE-TO-KNEE

Now turn, facing each other, and spend a few minutes answering these questions:

1. What are some ways we can make sure we're on the same page about conflict?
2. What boundaries and guidelines can we create for conflict?

GIVE EACH OTHER A

*smooch*

AND LET'S KEEP THIS DATE  
NIGHT GOING!

THANKS FOR  
*playing*  
ALONG!

We hope you enjoyed this at-home date night! Spending quality time with your love is always a good idea, and we're so glad you chose to do that today.

The next few pages have some tools you and your honey can use to transform conflict in your relationship.

## IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO HAVE A GOOD FIGHT?

Fights are never “fun” (unless they include food, water balloons and/or mud), but they can be beneficial to your marriage. Say whattttt?? Yep, it’s true. Read that last line again.

Having an argument can actually draw the two of you closer together. But, (c’mon, everything worth knowing has a “but”...)

**You have to have a good fight.** To understand the difference between a good fight and a bad fight a little better, let’s start with where you are currently in your relationship.

A six-year study on 124 couples showed an interesting correlation between how a couple begins an argument and whether they stay together. Of the 17 couples who divorced by year six, every single one began conflict discussions with high negativity, usually with one spouse criticizing the other’s character (“You’re so lazy”) and they then became defensive. (As most of us do when we’re criticized...)

However, Laurie Puhn, author of *Fight Less, Love More*, agrees that fighting styles play a key role in the health of a relationship. “Fighting to change a person just exhausts you,” she says. “Fighting to get a solution to the problem at hand is healthy.”

## SO HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY FIGHT TOGETHER?

According to Puhn, there are five different categories that most couples fall into. You might be a combination of a couple of them, but knowing how you fight is the first step to fighting well!

## THE DRAMA MAJORS

If your fights involve a lot of emotional explosions or objects being thrown across the room, you fit into this category. Puhn advises that when things start to get out of control, change the setting. Leave the room you're in and go sit down at the kitchen table—anything to help switch up the dynamics and stop the drama so you can deal with the issue at hand.



## THE OVER-ANALYZERS

While having an understanding of the issues that affect your relationship is healthy, Puhn says couples who overanalyze every detail of their misunderstandings won't find resolution, because as soon as they've picked apart one issue, they'll be on to the next. And when you constantly microanalyze every disagreement, you end up concentrating on what's wrong with your relationship rather than what's good.



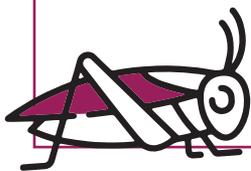
## ONE TALKS, ONE WALKS

We've all been in a situation where one partner wants to talk things out while the other wants to postpone or avoid the situation, or simply has much less to say. According to Puhn, both communication styles should be acknowledged and respected. She suggests telling the quieter partner that you want to talk, but setting a time limit. This will relieve their fears about being stuck in a long, drawn-out fight because there will only be a finite amount of time to come up with a solution.



## THE SILENT TREATMENT

If one person completely clams up during a fight, it can be frustrating and unfair to the other person. After all, if you can't ever talk about the issue, you'll never be able to solve it. This leads to moot conflict and palpable tension in the long run. Puhn says that when the silent treatment typically comes, it means the person who clams up has either given up or simply doesn't have the energy to fight anymore. If you notice your partner is going into silent mode, evaluate your personal fighting tactic. Do you have them in a corner? Are you yelling or using definitives like "always" and "never"? If you feel yourself going into silent mode, let your partner know that you don't feel like you have a voice in the situation and that you'd like to come back and talk in a little while.



## THE PEACEMAKERS

What if you don't fit in any of those categories and everything is totally fine? Here's the thing, it's actually more normal for couples to disagree than it is for them to NEVER fight. So, if you and your spouse never fight, it could be a sign that one or both of you is forgetting your own needs in an effort to keep the peace. Listen to your gut from time to time. Pay closer attention to your reaction and when you disagree or are unhappy about something, speak up.



BUT WHY DOES IT

*matter*

HOW WE FIGHT?

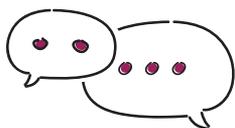
## TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, THE ANSWER IS CONTEMPT.

Contempt is a mix of anger and disgust, a feeling that indicates not only a surplus of unresolved emotions in the relationship, but also an imbalance in the way partners see each other. Conflict is a breeding ground for contempt. Whether it's saying something hurtful or demeaning you can't take back, not being willing to listen and engage or simply choosing to not argue at all, contempt can grow faster in these situations than Mario when he eats a "size-up" mushroom.

### GREAT. SO WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Tons of studies show that most marriages end due to contempt more than anything else, including infidelity, abuse, etc. Basically, relationships begin to deteriorate over time because spouses either refuse to handle conflict or don't know how to handle it in a productive way. So, feelings are hurt and walls are built over and over until the couple just can't see a way to be together anymore.

**The good news is...** You're already trying to figure out how to fight fair and be productive with your conflict. You're ahead of the game! Here are 3 simple ways you can keep contempt from building in your marriage.



#### **BE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT THE HARD STUFF.**

But remember that not all stuff is hard! Weigh the good with the bad and the mountains with the mole hills. Before you bring up something difficult or conflictual between the two of you, ask yourself how important it really is. For instance, if your spouse said something about you in

front of a group of people that made you feel small or unworthy, it's probably worth a conversation. But, if you ask your spouse whether or not they like your new shirt and they don't respond in the way you think they should... TBH, that's more of a you problem.



**BE OPEN ABOUT RESENTMENT.** If your spouse constantly

does something that makes you resent them, TELL THEM. Don't let it build. Here's a lighthearted example: You do the laundry every time. Even when the hamper is overflowing and taking over the house, your spouse simply adds to the pile. You resent them for it. Why can't they just take the initiative and help out every now and then? Well, they can. But, you should tell them how it makes you feel. They may think you enjoy doing the laundry or that you handle the laundry because they handle paying the bills, etc. The point is to talk about it. Don't assume it's a character flaw.



**BE YOUR SPOUSE'S BIGGEST FAN.** Hey! Guess what? You're

human. Which means you'll sometimes struggle to be positive, look at the bright side and not think poor thoughts about your significant other. Remember that you're both going to let each other down from time to time. It's life. No one's perfect, and no one's relationship is perfect. Try to think the best of your spouse and be their biggest fan.

LAST BUT  
NOT LEAST...

*shake*

YOUR GROOVE  
THANG!

There is a fine line between calling each other names, building resentment, tension, and bitterness, versus using conflict to build up your relationship, understand each other better and move forward in your marriage....

## AND IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WAY YOU DANCE!

Even if you have the worst moves (like Elaine from the show *Seinfeld*; Google it now for a good laugh), you can be a great mover and shaker when it comes to conflict. You just need a little practice to get the groove down right. Take a look at these two types of dances to get an idea of how you can learn to dance well together in conflict!

### CONFLICT DANCE 1: THE ONE MAN SHOW

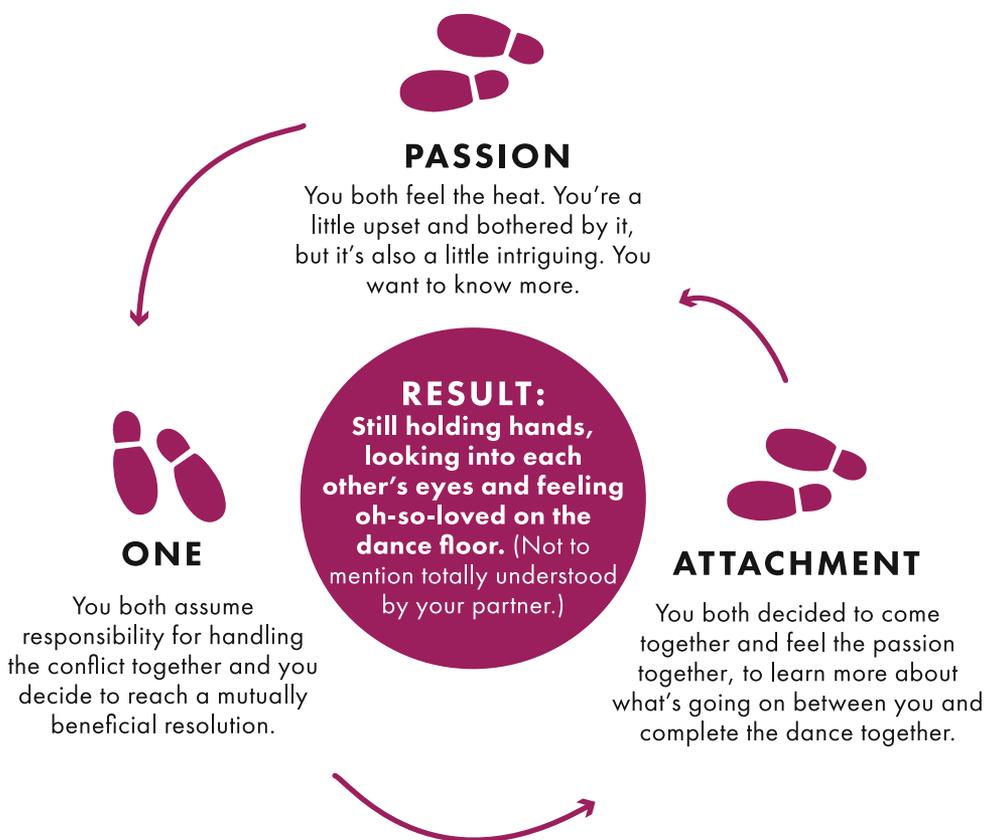
This dance looks like you have a partner to dance with, but in the end, it's really just about how you look on the dance floor. Here's why this doesn't work: When you just focus on how YOU feel instead of the problem at hand, it's easy to become aggressive, angry, bitter and ultimately pull away from your spouse.



## CONFLICT DANCE 2: A PAS DE DEUX

Sounds fancy, sensual and French, right? That's because it is. A pas de deux is the original ballet term for "a step of two." This conflict dance gets a 10 out of 10 rating from the judges.

Why? Because it requires both partners to be aware of each other at all times. It's impossible to step together if you're looking at yourself or even wishing your partner would do something different.



REMEMBER...

*conflict*

ISN'T EASY!

And you probably won't get it right every time. Let these dances make you aware of your own actions and how you choose to handle the tension when it rises. If you're both on the same page about how you want to handle conflict in your relationship, there's no reason you can't work together to make it a beautiful dance every time.

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