

# The Secret to a Fight-Free Relationship

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For decades, when Liz Cutler's husband, Tom Kreutz, did something that bothered her, Cutler would sometimes pull out a scrap of paper from the back of her desk drawer. On it she would scribble down her grievances: maybe Kreutz had stayed late at work without giving her a heads-up, or maybe he'd allowed their kids to do something she considered risky. The list was Cutler's way of honoring a promise she and her husband had made. They would talk about their frustrations only in scheduled meetings—which they held once a year for a time, and later, every three months. It's a system they've adhered to for more than 40 years.

Any psychologist will tell you that conflict is both an inevitable and a vital part of a close relationship. The challenge—which can make the difference between a lasting, satisfying partnership and one that combusts—is figuring out how to [manage conflict constructively](#).

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