

Don's Home News

Brought to you by: Don Zahnle, SRES, ABR
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The Rules of Battle: How to Fight Fair and Escape Escalation

Sometimes a little argument between you and your partner turns into a major battle so fast it gives you whiplash.

You didn't mean to start a war. Yet here you are in the midst of a raging conflict, wondering how you let your ego get in the way of a loving relationship. Every couple argues on occasion, but Brittany Wong of *The Huffington Post* claims there's an art to it. "Happy couples in long-term relationships rarely get into knock-down, drag-out fights because they don't lower themselves to school-yard tactics: no matter how heated things get, there's no name calling, eye rolling, or biting sarcasm."

Relationship experts agree. It's good to get your feelings out and bad to name-call or insult your partner. Criticism, contempt, and hostility are forbidden when you want to resolve the conflict. So, instead of saying, "You're an idiot!" you might say, "I'm really angry with you right now."

Still, once the cannons roar, what can you do about it? According to Bastiaan Blikman's blog *The Tiny Buddha*, decide what to say before saying it. Contribute to a healthy relationship by expressing your understanding of the other's feelings. These are time-tested tactics for smoothing the waters of conflict.

Bob Navarra of the Gottman Institute quotes Dr. John Gottman with good news about mending a broken relationship. Says Gottman, "We can't always avoid conflict ... so when couples make mistakes ... it is essential to have ways to repair the relationship. Conflict can actually deepen intimacy and bring couples closer together." So go ahead and fight. Just fight fair.

With less than 50% of the active real estate licensees in Georgia electing to become REALTORS®, homebuyers and sellers need to interview prospective agents and ask the question, "Are you a REALTOR®?"

Are you represented by a REALTOR®?

REALTOR® - A Registered collective membership mark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics. Inquiries regarding the Code of Ethics should be directed to the board in which a REALTOR® holds membership.

Should You Sell Your Home Yourself?

Despite the prevalence of online tools that can facilitate DIY sales, fewer Americans are choosing to go the route of "for sale by owner" when it comes to selling their homes. According to the National Association of Realtors (NAR), for-sale-by-owner sales represented only 8 percent of 5.25 million real estate transactions in 2015. Why? An economy in recovery, a challenging real estate market, and strict laws and regulations could all have Americans looking for security and peace of mind when it comes to selling their homes.

The for-sale-by-owner approach does have perks. Private sellers can set their own price. They deal with the buyer directly. At the end, they keep the proceeds instead of paying a commission to a Realtor. However, those very same perks have significant drawbacks.

Setting your own price means missing out on the expertise that a real estate agent has when it comes to pricing a home to sell and encouraging multiple bids. You don't have the know-how that comes with dozens of successful sales. It's easier for buyers (and their agents) to undercut private sellers, and it's difficult for sellers to remain neutral about their own property.

Private sellers also miss out on the strategies and industry knowledge provided by an experienced agent. A real estate agent knows how to market a home properly, how to work with other agents, and how to fulfill the obligations and respect the laws of the real estate industry. It's very easy for private sellers to misstep, costing themselves time and money.

As a seller, you want every advantage available. That means having an agent by your side.

Fifty Ways to Keep Your Spouse Happy Beyond Valentine's Day

If there's any true meaning to be found in Valentine's Day, perhaps it's that relationships need to be nurtured, protected, and celebrated.

Those in new romantic relationships (the ones for whom February 14 still feels exciting and full of promise) don't need reminders to flirt with their partners and practice kindness. Those in 10, 30, and 50-year-long relationships often do.

According to Dr. John Grohol, the founder of psychcentral.com, there are five secrets to successful long-term relationships: compromising, communicating, carefully choosing your battles, being honest about your needs, and never underestimating the importance of trust and honesty.

Other experts preach the importance of going out on regular dates, having separate and shared hobbies, renewing

vows, and paying lots of compliments. Some say that a slow-down in physical intimacy should be expected. Others encourage trying new things often. Long story short: keeping the romance in long-term relationships takes work, and there is no shortage of tips to try.

Like Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," there are plenty of ways to *keep* your lover.

Stop picking on them for what they lack, Jack

Always be their biggest fan, Stan
You don't need to be coy, Roy (be open and share!)

Just be as kind as you can be
Don't always make a fuss, Gus
Remember to kiss and touch and such
Think "we," not "me," Lee
And be as patient as you can be

Happy Valentine's Day.

Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question. Just email me at donzahnle@gmail.com for the answer.

Who said: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"?

Thanks for All Your Referrals!

I succeed when people like you refer me to your friends, neighbors and loved ones. It's the best kind of feedback I can receive. So thanks for continuing to pass this newsletter on to people you care about.

Are You Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

Do you want to know how the price of your home has changed in today's market? Do you want to know for how much other homes in your neighborhood are selling?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I can help.

Either call or text me at 404-939-1309 or [email](mailto:donzahnle@gmail.com) me for a no-obligation, professional evaluation.

I won't pressure you into listing with me or waste your time. [Read about how I feel about pressure!](#) I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at donzahnle@gmail.com and we will arrange a time to get together.

Worth Reading

How Your Home Can Heal a Bad Day

Janet Dunn
Houzz.com

Bad days happen, but you can prepare your home with resources to battle them. Keep scented candles or bath oils handy, since aromas can soothe stress. Pay attention to your bathroom, especially the shower or tub. Water-time can be relaxing.

Don't neglect a good, home-cooked meal. Working with your hands can relieve stress. Sharing that meal with someone who can listen to your problems is also key. **More:** <http://tinyurl.com/jd7m8mc>

The Face Everything Technique and Why Avoiding Difficulties Doesn't Work

Leo Babauta
lifehacker.com

If you're avoiding reading this article, you should read this article. Here, in a post previously published on Zen Habits, Leo Babauta describes how humans excel at avoiding difficulty. That, he says, is dangerous. He encourages readers to practice facing everything. Intentionally ask yourself what you're doing and avoiding. Stay in the emotions of what you're avoiding and take appropriate action. **More:**

<http://tinyurl.com/zso2q2n>

What's the Use of Regret?

Gordon Marino
The New York Times

The dark days of February may be filling you with regret. New Year's resolutions may have fallen by the wayside. Valentine's Day may trigger memories of failed relationships or remind you that your current relationships aren't all they could be. Professor Gordon Marino explains here, it can be helpful if we respond to it appropriately. **More:**

<http://tinyurl.com/zds3351>

How to Set the Stage for Home Buyers

In a hot market, selling your home may be easy. Selling it for top dollar takes a little more work. To achieve this, staging is the way to go. This is the process of beautifying your home to appeal to as many potential buyers as possible.

Many people can't visualize the possibilities within a room, so staging helps the buyers as they view your home. The goal of staging is to transform your home into an environment so inviting that buyers can imagine themselves living in your space.

Creating this buyer-ready environment takes talent, and it can be a critical step for a fast sale.

What does a stager do?

A good stager improves the interior and sharpens curb appeal as well. Today, most buyers see pictures online before choosing which homes to tour. Staging ensures that yours is seen in the best possible light. It makes your listing stand out from the competition.

While some people actually replace all the furniture, smart staging may mean anything from stripping your home of personal photographs and knick-knacks to cleaning the rugs or polishing floors. You may need to deep-clean bathrooms or clear kitchen counters. The stager may suggest painting everything a warm and inviting—but always neutral—color.

How much does staging cost?

The cost of staging ranges from a few hundred to many thousands of dollars, depending on the reputation of the stager, the size of the property, and the quality and quantity of fixes required. The final results can be well worth the investment. If you live in a neighborhood where several homes are listed, staging may mean a quicker sale at a better price.

Can I stage my home myself?

Of course, you can try to stage your home yourself, but it's hard to be objective about your own things. A fresh pair of eyes can make all the difference—which translates into dollars.

Quick Cacao Facts for Chocolate Lovers

Did you know February isn't chocolate's biggest month for sales? Close to 90 million pounds are purchased the week before Halloween. That's nearly double the 48 million pounds sold during the week of February 14.

If you plan to be part of that 48 million, you can further impress your sweetheart with the following knowledge about your Valentine's Day gift. The alluring treat has a history both dark and sweet:

- The Latin name for cacao trees means "food of the gods."
- The word chocolate comes from a Mayan term that means "bitter water."
- Mayans used it in baptisms and marriages.
- Mayans also sacrificed children to ensure a good cacao crop.
- Between 40 and 50 million people are involved in cocoa farming and production.
- The Industrial Revolution made chocolate available to the masses.
- Chocolate drinks can boost energy more than sports drinks.
- Dark chocolate's benefits include increasing memory and attention span.
- The "buzz" from eating chocolate can outlast the highs produced by kissing.
- To get the benefits of dark chocolate, make sure the top ingredient isn't sugar.

What Meaning Is Hiding Behind Your Bouquet?

Roses don't just smell sweet; their colors also communicate messages. Most people know the basics. Red means love. White means purity. Yellow means friendship. However, those meanings change depending on the flowers. A red carnation means flashy. A red chrysanthemum means sharing. Yellow carnations stand for cheerfulness, but secret admirers should send yellow chrysanthemums. Red tulips may declare love, but yellow ones show the sender is hopelessly in love.

It takes more than the proper petal hue to send the best message. Different flowers have their own meanings. Gardenias express joy. Jasmine stands for grace and elegance. Ivy expresses fidelity. Use lilacs for your first love. Be cautious about sending orange blossoms; they stand for fertility.

Keep in mind: bouquets aren't just for romantic lovers. Zinnias, for example, express thoughts of friends.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

How can I balance needs versus wants as I home-shop?

Here's the trick to buying your best house: know what you need. Really, you only need a solid roof, good floors and walls, plumbing, heating, and lighting. Everything else is preference.

Imagine your dream home. Review each item that makes it ideal. Ask which items you could live without and which ones you would pay extra to have. Embrace delayed gratification. Items you want are often those you can add later. You can change features such as light fixtures, countertops and paint. Answering these questions can help you determine budgets for the home purchase and future renovations.

Make a list. Think about a home's different features: bedrooms, bathrooms, lighting, landscaping. List characteristics of each. Determine which ones you need to have, would like to have and don't want. This will help you avoid looking at homes you know don't interest you.

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Sudoku instructions: Complete the 9 × 9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3 × 3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

This newsletter and any information contained herein are intended for general informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal, financial or medical advice. The publisher takes great efforts to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this newsletter. However, we will not be responsible at any time for any errors or omissions or any damages, howsoever caused, that result from its use. Seek competent professional advice and/or legal counsel with respect to any matter discussed or published in this newsletter. This newsletter is not intended to solicit properties currently for sale.

Decadent Rosewater Brownies

A simple treat to make your Valentine's Day sweet.

1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
12 tablespoons butter
8 ounces semisweet chocolate chunks
2 cups sugar
4 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 teaspoons rosewater (to taste or optional)

Preheat the oven to 350°F and grease a 9x9-inch baking pan.

Combine flour, baking powder, cocoa, and salt in a medium bowl. Melt butter and chocolate over low heat in a double boiler. Let sit 10 minutes to cool. Whisk sugar, eggs, vanilla, and rosewater together until pale, about 5 minutes. Slowly add chocolate mixture to egg mixture while gently whisking. Add the wet ingredients to the dry flour mixture until just combined, being careful not to overmix. Pour batter into greased pan.

Bake for 25–30 minutes. Set aside to cool, then cut out pieces with a heart-shaped cookie cutter.

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