

Fighting about politics? Tips to keep your marriage on track

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Many personal relationships suffer during political races when couples hang on ferociously to their political views and they differ from those of their mate's, says Stacy D. Phillips, celebrity divorce attorney. This year's run for the White House will be more contentious than ever, she says.

"No couple has to ruin his or her relationship or cause a permanent rift just because they are polarized on candidate choices or political views on propositions," Phillips says.

She suggests they take advantage of one or more of the following tips:

1. Agree to disagree - and have that talk openly and soon.

Set some ground rules - that both of you can honor. For instance, should or should you not talk about politics? If so, what are the boundaries for discussion? Should you post yard signs or shouldn't you? See if you can come to terms with some guidelines. Having specifics in place will preserve both your sanity and your relationship.

2. Host your own debate - with a "non-partisan" friend or family member (even one of your children) as the moderator.

Time this debate. When it is over, it is over. You can partake in one or more between now and Nov. 4. Refrain - from any discussion about politics. Many couples who are staunch about their political beliefs are wise to refuse to discuss political points of view (especially if alcohol is involved!). Refraining is something you both have to agree to though and when you make such an agreement, keep it.

3. Employ a sense of humor - at all times if you do get into heated discussions over your personal political preferences.

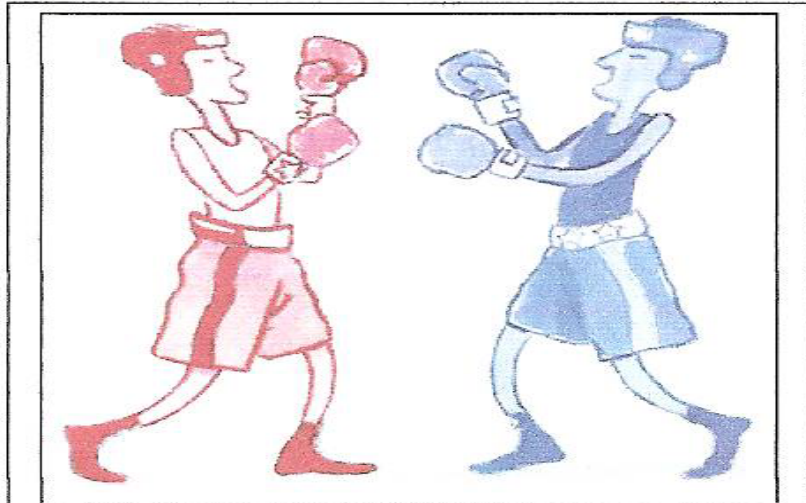
Humor has a wonderful way of breaking tension and allowing your communication to hit the "refresh" button. Set time limits - for any political discussions and make sure each of you has equal time. When the timer goes off resist the temptation to carry the discussion any further. Focus on what you have in common - immediately after you run out of breath spewing your political viewpoints. This election will come and go, but hopefully it will not take your relationship with it.

4. Realize that disagreeing over politics is not a relationship-breaker.

Focus on those aspects of your relationship that indicate you belong together. Promise to make equal donations - or agree not to make any donations at all to either political party. Couples tend to resent one donating more than the other. Be fair, upfront and honest, or risk having such silly deception impact your relationship adversely.

Stacy D. Phillips, managing partner at Phillips, Lerner, Lauzon & Jamra, Los Angeles, is a certified family law specialist and author of "Divorce: It's All About Control - How to Win the Emotional, Psychological and Legal Wars" (ExecuProv, \$14.95). Phillips represents many celebrities in film, television, music, sports and politics.

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