

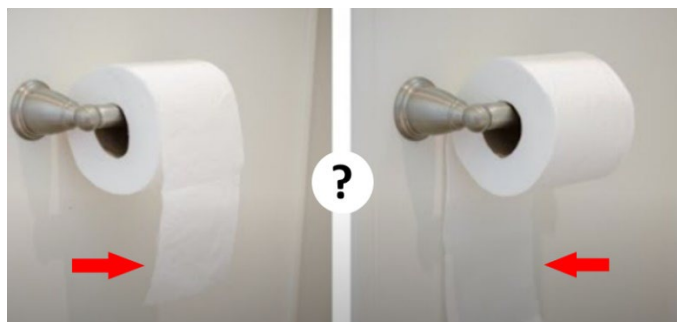


Choose Your Battles

Opening Icebreaker: Start with this lighthearted, brief icebreaker to introduce the “Choose Your Battles” topic. For this icebreaker, go through each item on the list and discuss the following: For each scenario if you are in a situation with someone else whom you are close too and they have a different view than you, are you more likely to **insist on your choice or let them choose?**

For you, who usually gets their way when there is a difference in view with a friend or partner: **ME or THEM?**

- ✓ Where to eat? (Do you insist on choosing or let them choose...)
- ✓ What show or movie to watch?
- ✓ What plays on the stereo in the car?
- ✓ Who pays the check at a restaurant?
- ✓ Where to go on vacation?
- ✓ (If you have children) Parenting style?
- ✓ Who drives the car when traveling together?
- ✓ Time to go to sleep?
- ✓ Choice of furniture in shared living space?
- ✓ Which way the toilet paper is put on the dispenser?



- ✓ Others? Come up with your own if you want to and time allows...

Discussion:

“Choose your battles” – Just about everyone has heard this wise saying at one point or another. At times, making concessions, giving in, or compromising can be very positive and helpful in life. It is often necessary to be flexible and willing to give a little in order to keep peace and maintain healthy relationships. Life can be easier when we make an effort to meet people halfway to avoid needless arguments. Consider an example of an easy compromise:

- *“As a group we were all hungry, but it seemed like we could not agree on what to order for lunch so to end the arguing we all decided to just order some plain pizzas.”*



However, there are some areas where we may make a personal decision to take a stand and not give in based on strong feelings about our **principles, values, or morals**. Consider some examples which involve taking a stand for what we believe in:

- *“I am in recovery, and I went on a date with someone who kept asking me to “loosen up and just have a drink” but I knew that this was an area where I just could not find middle ground, so I ended the date early and went home.”*
- *“I have been at my job for years and I saw a new coworker stealing from the register. When they saw me, they said they would split the money with me. As tempting as that was, I knew that is an area where I could not concede or give in, based on how much I value my job and how I feel personally about stealing.”*

Questions for group discussion:

1. **What is a life experience you can think of where you successfully were able to compromise or meet others halfway with a give and take, and it helped keep the peace in your life?**
2. **Why is it important to be able to be flexible and not always insist on your way in the process of recovery for substance use and mental health issues? (In other words what are some examples of times when listening to others instead of ourselves can be beneficial?)**
3. **What is an area where you may need to try to be more understanding, flexible, and adaptable? (For example: “My counselor has suggested I speak with a psychiatrist for depression, but I have resisted however maybe I should at least go for the evaluation and see for myself”)**
4. **When it comes to standing your ground for something that is important to you, have you ever given in on one of your principles, values or morals and later regretted it? (For example: “When I was a kid, I said I would never ever smoke cigarettes but by the time I was 20 I gave in and now I have been smoking for years, regretfully”) – Provide an example from your life:**
5. **How can substance use disorders lead a person toward giving in or compromising values, morals, principles? (For example: “I said I would never steal from family or friends, but I ended up “borrowing” things from people I cared about and not giving things back when I needed money in active substance use”)**



In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.

Thomas Jefferson

When making positive life changes it is extremely important to strengthen, develop and enhance our values, morals and principles which guide our lives as these can help us make positive decisions consistently going forward in life. With that said:

Below try to identify some life areas that are important to you today where you are strengthening your resolve and determination not to give in and instead to stand your ground and do what is best for yourself, your loved ones, your goals and for your future?

Some examples:

- *“Staying away from alcohol is a priority in my life today which I do my best not to compromise.”*
- *“Being there for my children is a value in my life and I am working on setting aside time every day for this.”*
- *“Right now, honesty is a principle I am striving for every day especially when things are difficult, and I am tempted to lie.”*

What are some life areas that you feel strongly about today, and you will try not to compromise? (What values, morals, and principles come into play in these decisions?)

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“Remain true to your values. If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.”