Fight right

A couple explains how to make the most of life's little— or big—battles

by JUDY GELMAN

Kim and Penn Holderness

Costco's suggested Book Club read provides insight into a selected book, as well as an appropriate recipe to accompany your own book club's discussion.

Known for their popular and comic YouTube videos and song parodies, video bloggers and podcast hosts Kim and Penn Holderness (youtube.com/c/HoldernessFamilyVlogs) were surprised when they learned fans believed their lives were as harmonious off-screen as on. "Fighting is inevitable in a loving relationship, and ours is no different," says Penn. "When the fighting reached a critical mass, we knew there had to be a better way to keep our marriage running smoothly."

The two Costco members share the techniques they've acquired for fighting "correctly" in *Everybody Fights: So Why Not Get Better at It?*, their guide to helping couples argue more productively and end arguments feeling closer, more loved and better understood.

With the guidance of marriage coach and pastor Dr. Christopher Edmonston, the couple learned to improve their communication. "Simple disagreements can escalate into conflicts about every grudge we had ever held," says Kim, "but can be resolved if we stick to the issue at hand."

Metacommunicating—analyzing how they communicate together—has been essential to having more fruitful arguments. "We Monday-morning-quarterback our fights with a postgame analysis," explains Penn, "by determining what went right, what went wrong and which bad habits we need to break so we can do better next time."

While couples can benefit from reading and discussing *Everybody Fights*, the techniques can be applied to a variety of relationships. "We wrote this book about how to have more productive conversations as a couple—but these magic words work for our children too. 'Tell me more' and 'I hear you' go a long way when talking to your children," says Penn.

The duo felt well prepared for togetherness during the time of COVID-19. "So many couples are struggling with spending 24/7 with their partners," says Penn. "But we were already experts in that department. We've learned how to disagree without it leading to a breakdown."

The pandemic has also meant more time for cooking and inspired Kim's recipe for, and a humorous video about preparing, Chicken Tortilla "Anxiety" Soup (see recipe), a dish she makes when she's stressed. "Anxiety Soup is the perfect recipe for the pandemic," she jokes. "When you feel your anxiety rising, lean in, stir it up and eat it like a soup." ∎

Judy Gelman is the author of *The Book Club Cookbook* (TarcherPerigee, 2012; not available at Costco) and creator of the website BookClubCookbook.com.

Chicken Tortilla "Anxiety" Soup

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
2 carrots, peeled and chopped
2 zucchini, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
2 tsp garlic powder
2 tsp chili powder
2 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 tsp ground cumin
1½ tsp salt
2 cups chicken broth
1 (28-oz) can diced tomatoes
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 (13.5-oz) can unsweetened coconut milk
Tortilla strips
Avocado slices, shredded cheddar cheese and cilantro leaves, for topping (optional)

Heat olive oil in a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrots, zucchini and garlic. Sauté, stirring frequently, until vegetables begin to soften. Add all remaining ingredients except coconut milk, tortilla strips and optional toppings.

Bring to a low boil and reduce heat to simmer; stir in coconut milk. Cover; simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, until chicken is cooked through. Remove chicken from pot and dice or shred. Stir chicken back into the soup and heat through.

Garnish with tortilla strips and your choice of toppings, or eat as is. Makes 4 servings.

Recipe courtesy of Kim Holderness.

COSTCO CONNECTION

Everybody Fights (Item 1540386; 3/30) is available in most Costco warehouses.