

Learning Objective: To teach children the use of I-messages to express themselves without placing blame

Skill: Emotional communication

Ask the group, "What is an 'I-message'?"

Tell them:

When you're angry with people, it's easy to blame them for whatever happened. But when you blame other people, they often get angry with you. Then, everyone ends up with hurt feelings. You can use I-messages to tell other people what you really want, without judging, confronting, or blaming them. You can also use I-messages to express other feelings, like happiness or fear. I-messages always focus on what the speaker feels, rather than blaming the listener.

Here's how an I-message works:

- 1. Say what you feel (I FEEL...)*
- 2. Tell what the other person did that upset you (WHEN YOU...)*
- 3. Describe how you were affected (BECAUSE...)*
- 4. State what would make the situation better for you (AND I WANT...)*

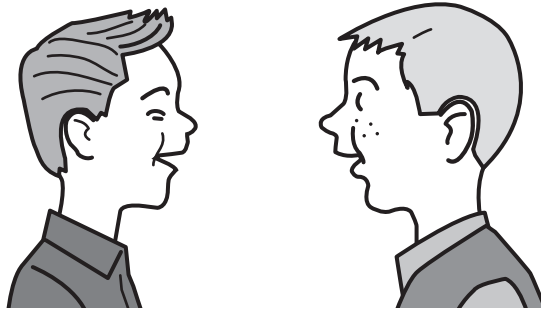
For example, let's imagine that Megan told Sara a secret, which Sara then told Kevin. Megan is very angry, so she tells Sara:

"I FEEL angry WHEN YOU tell my secret BECAUSE I asked you not to AND I WANT you to apologize and never do that again."

Distribute Activity Sheet 37. Pairs of children can take turns stating their I-messages to each other. These I-messages can be based on real or imagined situations. Individual children can also complete the sheet on their own.

Name _____ Date _____

Complete these I-messages for practice. Then, make up two of your own.



I FEEL happy WHEN YOU _____

BECAUSE _____ AND I WANT _____

I FEEL frustrated WHEN YOU _____

BECAUSE _____ AND I WANT _____

I FEEL afraid WHEN YOU _____

BECAUSE _____ AND I WANT _____

I FEEL sad WHEN YOU _____

BECAUSE _____ AND I WANT _____

I FEEL _____ WHEN YOU _____

BECAUSE _____ AND I WANT _____

I FEEL _____ WHEN YOU _____

BECAUSE _____ AND I WANT _____