

"I" MESSAGES

When we share our thoughts and feelings, we want to do so in a way that maximizes the chances that we will be listened-to and understood. "I" Messages offer a means to assertively express your feelings in a way which does not come across as adversarial or threatening. There are four components to an "I" Message:

1. Specify exactly what was said or done that relates to what you feel:

"When you are late..."

"When you hold my hand..."

2. Express the feeling (s) that you have:

"...I feel worried..."

"...I feel loved and special..."

3. Relate why you feel the way you do:

"...because I am concerned for your safety."

"...because we are close to one another."

4. When you are experiencing a negative emotion, express what type of behavior you would prefer:

"I would appreciate it if you would call when you are going to be late."

PROBLEM SOLVING/CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. Identify the problem. (Example: spouse coming home from work at variable times)

2. Take turns expressing each person's wants and needs, as the listener uses active listening skills. Example:

a. "I believe I need to work hard now in order to advance in my career and provide for my family."

b. "I need some help and relief here at home."

3. Brainstorm all possible solutions. Do not censure any possibilities. Be creative. Examples:

a. switch roles

b. quit job

c. sell house

d. move to a commune

e. set work cut-off time

4. Prioritize solutions in order of feasibility as they meet BOTH persons' needs. Attempt solutions, evaluate the results, return to Steps 2 & 3, as needed.