

ACTIVE LISTENING

Try to hear what the other person is saying and not to make assumptions about what they feel or what they might say

Show understanding and no blame by...

- **Tone of voice**
- **Facial expression**
- **Gestures**
- **Eye contact (as appropriate to culture)**
- **Posture**

Restate or paraphrase the person's most important thoughts AND feelings without repeating any putdowns or accusations. Use body language as a clue to feelings, or ask directly how they are feeling if they don't tell you.

Do not

- **Interrupt**
- **Offer advice**
- **Give suggestions**
- **Bring up similar problems or feelings from your past**

Remain neutral. Do not take sides, even to explain your position.

"I" Messages

The purpose of "I" messages is to give information about how something is affecting you, in a non-blaming way. It often serves to give the other person information without making them defensive.

First, stop and think about how you feel.

- When we are upset it isn't always obvious how we are feeling
- Are you angry? Does hurt or fear lie under it? Your message will be more useful if you can share what is really going on. (Anger at your child arriving home late is likely based on fear. Share both the anger and the fear.)

Use this formula if you need to: (it helps make sure you are really paying attention to how you feel.)

- When _____,
I feel _____
because _____
and I would like _____.
- Example: "When there are toys on the kitchen floor, I feel annoyed because they hurt to step on, and I would like you to clean them up."

You are not using an I message when:

- You say "I feel as if.. or I feel like... or I feel that" – you will always follow these phrases with something you are thinking, not feeling

The idea is simple. The practice is hard for most of us.