

I-Messages*

ACTIVITY

37

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...)

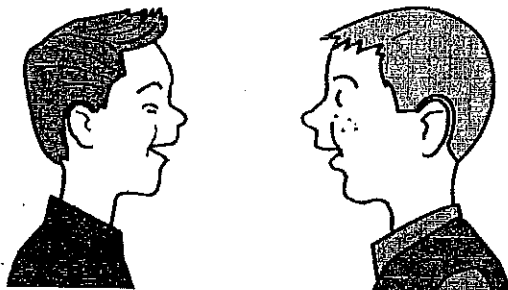
For example, let's imagine that Megan told Sara a secret, which Sara then told Kevin. Megan is very angry, so she tells Sara:

"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 _____



How can you tell someone who cuts in front of you that you were first in line?

What can you say to a classmate who is telling silly jokes about you to make others laugh?

How can you ask to join classmates already playing a game at recess?

How can you tell a classroom neighbor to stop taking your supplies?

How can you tell a friend you would rather play with someone else?

What do you say to an older student who is picking on you?

What can you say to a classroom neighbor who keeps looking at your assignment?

What can you say to a friend when you haven't been honest with them?

How can you tell a friend that you don't like it when she copies your hairstyle and clothing?

What can you say when you haven't been a good friend to someone?



What can you say to a classmate you've been picking on?

What do you do when a friend apologizes to you after hurting your feelings?

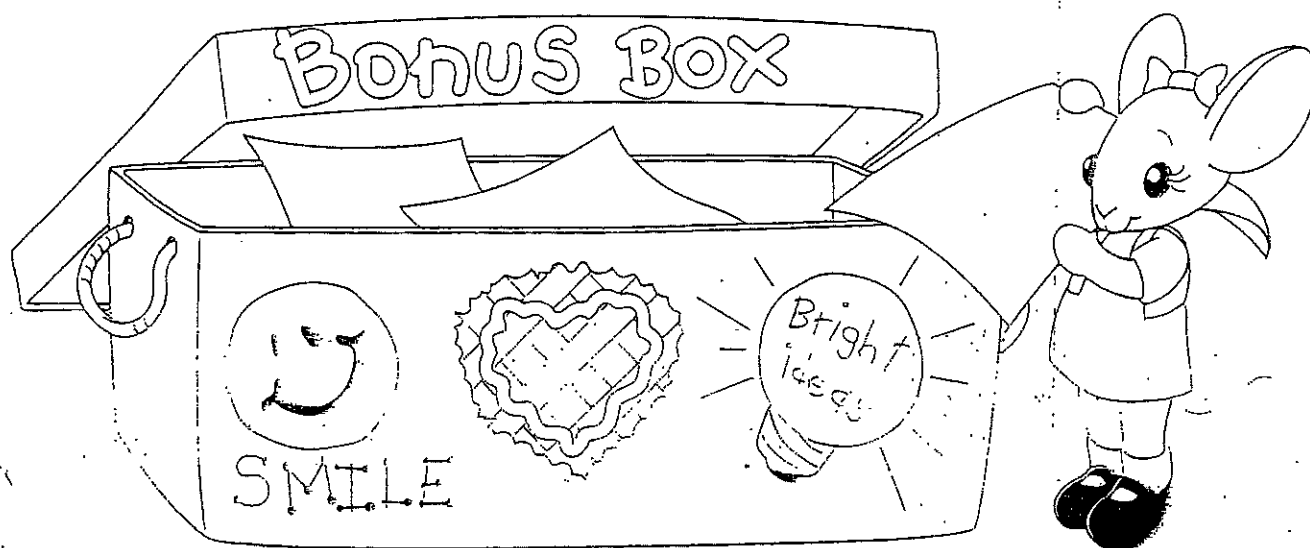
What can you say to a friend who likes your ideas about artwork and writing so much that he uses yours instead of his own?



Make a fun game from the Bonus Box! Copy several of the situation cards on page 66. On the blank sides of the cards, write several sample situations of behaviors that students need to work on. For example, if you notice that students are calling each other names on the playground, write a situation on a card (using made-up names).

Terri is playing hopscotch with Susan and Micah. Terri has not played this game very much, so she keeps stumbling. Susan keeps whispering silly names about Terri, like "goofball" and "clumsy girl," during Terri's turn. What would you do if you were Micah?

You can place students on teams or select students randomly. The object of the game is to give an appropriate solution to the given situation on the card. For each student's turn, she must draw a situation card from the Bonus Box and read it out loud (depending on the age of students, you may choose to read the card aloud). Then, the student must give her answer to the situation presented. Since these are open-ended questions, with several "answers" to the problem, you must decide if the response is appropriate. If the student's response offers a positive end to the situation or at least diffuses a potentially difficult situation, the student writes her name on the back of the situation card (which becomes an award ticket) and returns it to you. As tickets are given to you, place them aside until the end of the game. (If a student gives an inappropriate response to the situation card, you might decide to give her a chance to rethink and restate her original answer.) After everyone has had a chance to earn an award ticket, give the team who answered the most cards correctly a group reward or privilege, such as being the first group to line up to go to lunch that day. For the grand prize winner (which can be selected from either team if you choose to play this way), place all of the award tickets back in the Bonus Box. Pick one award ticket at random from the Bonus Box, which can be redeemed for a special prize, such as a free homework pass or sticker pack.



Peaceful Role Play Cards

You and two classmates are friends. Lately, though, they haven't let you play with them during recess. How do you feel? What will you say to your friends?

Your friend has changed lately. He has begun to make bad choices. You still like your friend, but you don't agree with his decisions. What will you do about this friend?

Someone in your class begins to call you silly names. It may be fun to them, but you don't like it. How do you feel? What will you do?

A classmate in your group never takes turns. She always wants to be first and usually gets her way. How will you handle it?

A classmate continues to "borrow" your supplies and other things without your permission. How do you feel about this? What will you do?

You brought a new toy to play with during recess. A classmate wants to play with it, but you haven't had much time to play with your toy yet. What will you say?

A friend of yours likes to talk about herself and her belongings. It seems like bragging to you. How does it make you feel? What will you do or say?

Every time you begin to speak with your class group, a member interrupts you. It seems like you aren't getting to speak. How does this make you feel? What will you say to your group?

Your friend is telling stories lately that seem really hard to believe. You think your friend may be lying to impress people. How does this make you feel? How will you handle your friend's behavior?

You and your friend are not playing together anymore. She doesn't talk to you as much as she used to, and you notice her choosing other partners in class. How does this make you feel? What will you do?

