

SKILL 2: Giving and receiving constructive feedback

Giving and receiving constructive feedback is another important communication skill. One effective way to do this is with *I-messages*. I messages are an effective way of communicating because:

1. You are taking responsibility for the statement
2. The message sounds less blameful and negative than a you-message
3. They provide you with a great opportunity to share your own thoughts and feelings

Here are some examples of *you* messages:

- " You need to come home by 5 p.m. tomorrow"
- " You shouldn't do that"
- " You should call me from the payphone and tell me when you'll be home"
- " You are rude to my friends"
- " Here is what you should do"

Here are some examples of *I-messages* in the "***When you....I feel...***" format.

- "When you don't let me know what's going on, I get worried and start imagining that you're having problems or are in trouble"
- "When you don't call me and let me know what time you'll be home, I feel disappointed because I can't plan dinner for us when you get home"

Focusing and commenting on behaviours or situations is another good way to provide constructive feedback (this is used instead of making vague and very global comments about your partner).

For example:

Incorrect = "You are so annoying" (focuses on the person, is vague and global)

Correct = "When you leave your towel on the bed, I find it annoying because it makes the doona wet and the towel doesn't dry" (is specific and concrete, focuses on behaviour)