

# Promoting Child Welfare

## Promoting Child Welfare

### TRAINING PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT HEALTHY MARRIAGES, RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILIES

Many marriage and relationship education programs focus on developing effective communication and conflict resolution skills. While different processes or methods are used, the target skills remain consistent. These skills include assertive communication, I-messages, decision-making, arguing effectively, learning to avoid behaviors that hurt when arguing, and conflict resolution. As a result it is important for professionals to become personally proficient in these techniques and to learn how to develop these skills in consumers.

Attached you will find a few simple pieces to add to your “tool box.” They can be used to refresh your memory or as a teaching aide for consumers or a visual aide in your office. We hope they will be helpful.

Also included are some techniques that may help you to work more effectively with consumers and can be particularly helpful in moving them towards their desired outcomes. These include motivational interviewing and the miracle question.

For more information on supporting healthy marriages, relationships and families, please go to our website at [www.thrivingcouples thrivingkids.syr.edu](http://www.thrivingcouples thrivingkids.syr.edu).



*Syracuse University*

*Promoting Child Welfare: Training Professionals to Support Healthy Marriages,  
Relationships and Families\**

*440 Sims Hall Syracuse, NY 13244*

*Tel: (315) 443-5550*

*\* Project funded by the Administration for Children and Families,  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

## Assertiveness Contains:

1. **A description of the situation as you see it.** Be specific about time and actions. Don't make general accusations. Focus on behaviors not motives.
2. **A description of your feelings.** Use "I" messages. "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_". To remain focused and less emotional, try thinking of positive feelings related to your goals and not resentment of the other person.
3. **A description of the changes you'd like made.** Be specific about what should stop and what should start. Make sure your request is reasonable and do-able. Be willing to make changes in return.



### Assertive Communication Behaviors

- State feelings, needs and wants.
- Good eye contact & straight posture.
- Active listening.
- Positions and decisions are made clear.
- Confrontation is assertive, not passive and not aggressive.

### Being Assertive

- Use of factual descriptions instead of judgments.
- Avoiding exaggerations.
- Using "I" and not "You".
- Expressing thoughts, feelings and ownership (taking responsibility for your part).

# I – Messages

*Telling Others What You Feel in a Direct,  
Non-Blaming Way*

**By using I- messages you will be able to better accept responsibility for your actions and to express your feelings so that others will hear you.**

**The benefits of using I-messages include:**

- **Your partner or child is less likely to be offended as they create a softer start-up to a conversation.**
- **Defiance is reduced and cooperation increased.**
- **You become more aware of your feelings as you think about how to express yourself in I-messages.**
- **You are more likely to improve relationships by avoiding negative communication styles such as putdowns, demanding, whining, blaming, judging, criticism, defensiveness, contempt, etc.**

## I-Message Parts

1. **“I feel ....” (state the feeling)**
2. **“when you.....” (describe the other person’s behavior)**
3. **“because .....**” (explain the results of or consequences of the person’s behavior)
4. **“and I want.....” (state what would make the situation better for you)**

# Effective Decision Making Skills



1. **Describe and understand the problem.**
2. **Describe the desired outcome?** Be as specific as possible about your goal. Think long term and short term.
3. **What are the personal and other forces blocking you from achieving your goal?**
4. **List as many solutions or courses of action as possible. Choose the three most likely to succeed.**
5. **Carefully consider each of the three chosen solutions.** What are the pros and cons? How do they fit with your goal? Which appeals to you most and why?
6. **Select the best solution.** Take time to relax and let it “sink in”. Let go of the other options.
7. **Commit yourself wholeheartedly** into carrying out the decision. Make a plan and schedule time to make it happen.

# *Arguing Well*

*Quarreling and disagreeing  
are a normal part  
of all relationships,  
learn to argue well.*

Find out what the problem is. **Listen well.**

Stick to the one issue.

**Address the problem:**

Don't attack the person.

Seek to **understand** the other's point of view.

Show **caring** for each other's feelings.

Postpone when it gets to be too much.

**Remain responsible** for what you say and do.

Put the argument behind you.

**Make repairs. Show appreciation.**



# When Arguing Hurts ~ *Behaviors to Avoid*

Not Listening

Dismissing

Teasing - Criticizing

Name Calling

Put Downs

Sneering - Contempt

Bossing

Blaming

Threats

Getting Even

Bringing Up the Past

Making Excuses

Not Taking Responsibility

**AN IMPORTANT  
POINT:**

Violating a person's personal, emotional and physical safety is destructive and abusive.

Any one of these behaviors - if used excessively, to control, to demean or to purposefully damage another - could be considered harassment or abuse.

# Conflict Resolution: An Important Skill



- **Start with the right frame of mind.**

Respect. Right Time. Arguing Well.

- **Define the problem or issue of disagreement.**

Listen. Empathize. Understand both sides.

- **Each person offers how they contributed to the problem.**

Responsibility. Ownership in Solving the Problem.

- **Each person suggests solutions that he/she can personally do and what both can do together.**

- **Both agree on a solution that each can accept – and do it!**

- **Agree on a time to come back together to discuss progress.**

- **Show Appreciation.**