

Improve communication

What do you do when you want to discuss a subject?

There are 3 factors that can make all the difference between good and bad communication.

- How to raise the issue?
- When to bring it up?
- Why do you want to talk about it?

We propose you think ahead before you start. Here's a check list.

- What is my message?
- What is the purpose of the message/
- What do I wish to achieve?
- When is the best time to talk?
- How long is it likely to take?
- How can I best get my message across so my partner will listen?
- How prepared am I to wait for the reply and listen to my partner?
- What ground am I prepared to give?
- How much will I compromise?
- How prepared am I to negotiate?

You and I messages

Consider this message and imagine what it would be like to be on the receiving end:-

"You're useless. You're always turning up late. You never ring me to explain and you couldn't care less when I get upset about it"

This message certainly gets the speaker's feelings across but how likely is it to encourage your partner to listen to you or elicit the response you want?

This is an example of a **YOU** message.

YOU messages pass critical judgement on the person's behaviour they lay to blame. Usually they demand that the other person should change or confront your wishes. They give no useful information as to why they might change. They are likely to make your partner angry, hurt, defensive and self righteous. The issue you wanted to discuss will get lost in a battle of accusation and counter attack. Simply blaming will not get you what you really want.

Consider this:-

"Thank goodness you've arrived, I'm so relieved. I get so worried when you turn up late. Please can you ring me and let me know in advance from now on? Otherwise it makes me feel like you don't care"

This message gets the feelings across but explains rather than blame. This is an **I** message. **I** messages make statements about what you personally feel and think.