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abcd5. "I" Messages make for Healthier Relationships at Work and at Home

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The next time you're upset with someone, try sending "I-Messages" instead of "You-Messages."

For example:

You notice your small child about to cut some paper with your sharp scissors.

The "You-Message":

You: "Put those scissors down. You're going to cut yourself."

Child: "No, I'm not."

You: "Yes, you are! Put them down!"

Child: "No!"

The "I-Message":

You: "When I see you with those scissors, I am worried that you will cut yourself."

Child: "That's your problem."

You: "You're right it is my problem! I love you and it's my job to be concerned for your safety. I am going to have to insist that you give me those scissors until I have time to help you use them later."

Notice how the "You-Message" can be construed as an invitation to fight while the "I-Message" can be seen as an invitation to share feelings and solve the problem.

"You-Messages" tend to make people defensive. "I-Messages" are not judgmental; they merely express how you feel. As such, the former shuts off further communication, while the latter encourages it.

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