



Relationship Skills

ABOUT MORNINGSIDE CENTER

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility's evidence-validated programs engage young people in learning essential social and emotional skills and help educators build productive and respectful schools. The 4Rs Program combines superior children's books with engaging SEL activities that explore community, feelings, relationships, conflict, and problem-solving, adding depth to literacy instruction.

I – Messages

By: The 4Rs



I-Messages

Note to the teacher:

This activity is an excerpt from The 4Rs™ [Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution] *Teaching Guide for Grade 4*, Unit 4: Assertiveness, pp. 66-67.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: chalk board and chalk

So far in this unit we've been helping students with two kinds of assertiveness skills: saying no; and stating clearly and confidently what you want or what you believe to be right.

Here is a strategy that can be useful in dealing with problems that come up with friends and family – that is, people who are likely to care about our feelings!

Begin by writing “I-message” on the board.

Explain that today the students will learn what an I-message is and how to construct one.

An “I-message” is a way to be strong without being mean when you are angry or upset or disappointed with something another person has done.

The formula for an “I-message” is as follows:



I-Messages

I feel _____
(state your feeling)

when you _____
(describe the specific behavior)

because _____
(state the effect the behavior has on you)

The “I-message” is distinguished from a “You-message”: in a “You-message,” you attack the other person, make judgments about him, sometimes even call her names.

For example, say your younger brother borrows your bat and leaves it at a friend's house. A “You-message” would be: “You little jerk. How could you be so stupid! Now I don't have my bat when I need it!”

In this situation, what would an “I-message” be? Elicit possible I-messages from the students (for example: I feel frustrated when you borrow my bat and leave it at your friend's house, because I need it today and it's not here.

Discuss: What are your comments about these two ways of communicating feelings? Can you see using an I-message the next time you feel like calling somebody a name? Why? Why not?

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