

## Healthy Relationship High School Teachers Toolkit

Monash Education

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# Messages

To communicate effectively, it is necessary that you send clear messages to your partner and that your messages are completely understood. Miscommunication is probably the cause of many of your arguments and fights. By learning some specific skills you can ensure that the arguments between you and your partner are kept to a minimum. To be more effective in verbal communication with your partner, consider these guidelines to make certain your message is heard and accepted by your partner.

- **When you communicate verbally with your partner, take responsibility for your messages.** Use words like I, me and my, to communicate your message. In this way you “own” the messages you send to your partner. When you use words like “they” or “some people,” you put the responsibility of what you are communicating onto someone else. Take responsibility for your own words. Using “you” often sounds threatening, aggressive and blaming, whereas creating I-messages conveys comments in the least threatening and overbearing manner.
- **Maintain eye contact and speak directly to your partner.** When asking questions, avoid dead-ended questions that require a yes-no answer (“Did you cook dinner like I asked?”). Instead, rely on open-ended questions that allow your partner the opportunity to express what happened (“What did you do this afternoon?”).
- **Express your feelings.** Examples of how to express your feelings include such statements as “I feel angry when you get home so late from work without calling me” or “I get frustrated when you refuse to pay attention to the children.” In the boxes on the left-hand side of the table, list the situations that frustrate you most about your partner. In the right-hand column, express your feelings to that person, using the guidelines you just read about.

Situations that frustrate me

What I would like to say to my partner

1

2

3

4

5

6