**[The Power Of Using ‘I’ Messages With Your Child](https://www.healthymatters.com.hk/the-power-of-using-i-messages-with-your-child/" \o "The Power Of Using ‘I’ Messages With Your Child)**

Wondering how to appropriately react when your child upsets you or does something unacceptable? Here is a summary of the powerful tool of using ‘I’ messages:

**What are ‘I’ messages exactly?**

‘I’ messages defuse conflict by avoiding accusatory or escalatory language. In a parent-child interaction, an ‘I’ message is a style of communication that focuses on the parent’s feelings rather than accusing the child, which is called a ‘you’ message. **It is a way of expressing your own needs and feelings in a respectful way that doesn’t shame or blame the child.** Saying “I felt let down” as opposed to “you broke your promise” is less likely to garner a defensive reaction.

**Why are ‘I’ messages an effective parenting tool?**

Parents can use an ‘I’ message when they want to express themselves without blaming, judging, or negatively-labeling their children. When applied correctly, ‘I’ messages help parents state their feelings and needs so that their child can change their behavior and cooperate. **When used correctly, ‘I’ messages foster positive communication in relationships and teach empathy.** Sharing feelings and thoughts in an honest and open manner can help parents and children grow closer on an emotional level. In fact, ‘I’ messages are effective in all relationships. **They encourage ownership of emotions.**

**How to use ‘I’ messages?**

There are usually four parts to a parent’s I-message:

1. You explain how you feel about the problem/behavior:***I feel…***
2. You state the problem/describe the specific behavior: ***When I see/hear…***

(3) You describe the practical effect or consequences the problem/behavior has on you: ***because…***

(4) You state your needs/appropriate behavior: ***I need you to…***

**Putting ‘I’ messages into practice:**

***Situation 1:*** A father wants his child to stop running across the street.

*Common response:*“How many times will I have to tell you, don’t run across the street!”

‘*I’ message:*“I feel worried when you run across the street, because you might get hit by a car or fall and hurt yourself. I need you to walk by my side or hold my hand.”

***Situation 2:*** A mother becomes angry when her teenage daughter borrows her sweater and returns it with stains.

*Common response:*“You ruined my sweater, are you ever going to grow up?”

*‘I’ message:*“I feel disappointed when you return my sweater with a stain and try to hide it, because I wanted to wear it today and now I can’t. I need you to get the stain remover and fix it please.”

The more you practice, the more natural you will sound! Remember to be very careful when using ‘you’ messages as they can badly affect your child’s self-esteem.