**[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!

Adapted from *Healthy Matters*