

Communication

Feelings are there to tell us what we need and each feeling being slightly different can guide us to answers. Look at the chart below and see examples of feelings and how they point to unmet needs.

TUNING INTO NEEDS THROUGH FEELINGS

When you feel:**You may need:**

Bored or rebellious

Challenge, stimulation and achievement

Confused or
overwhelmed

Meaning, sense and order

Cranky, irritable (stressed)

Reduced demands, time alone

Tired or mischievous

Rest, recreation and play

Worried, anxious

Reassurance, Safety

Lonely

Affection, love and belonging

Sad

Grieving

Guilty or Defensive

Moral integrity

Angry, afraid

Safety, justice

Resentful, rebellious

Autonomy, choice and freedom

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Use this checklist of listening do's and don'ts to help develop your awareness of ineffective patterns that might creep into exchanges with your child.

Listening Don'ts		Listening Do's	
	I took over while my child was speaking?		I paid attention with body language and honest interest?
	I asked questions other than to clarify?		I focused on understanding the content of the message being expressed?
	I gave advice, made suggestions, and passed on my infinite knowledge?		I paid attention to body language and the tone of voice to enhance my capacity to be empathetic?
	I minimized my child's feelings?		I reflected back content and feelings by being active as a listener?
	I evaluated my child by blaming or praising?		I addressed the needs that were being expressed without taking over?

Need Vocabulary

Relationships:

acceptance, affection, appreciation, closeness, community, company, consideration, empathy, equality, fairness, honesty, inclusion, love, support, reassurance, respect, trust, understanding, warmth

Personal:

achievement, accomplishment, autonomy, choices, comfort, contribution, creativity, dreams, emotional safety, freedom,

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goals, integrity, justice, meaning, order, peace and quiet,
physical safety, play, self-worth, sense of self, time alone

Practice

The situation (what happened) how did my child behave?

Did you need to deal with the behaviour through limit setting first?

At some point were you able to reflect your child's feelings?

Did your child express feelings?

What need was frustrated in your child?

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Did you use any listening don'ts?

How did your child react to any ineffective listening?

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Feeling chart updated by Marion Little



Steps to an Effective “I Statement”

The examples given below are for the angry dad in our example.

Step 1:

Make an Observation: Describe only what you can see or hear. An observation is something that could be recorded with a video camera. Keep it brief and leave judgment, exaggerations, opinions and blame out of it!

(example: It is 6:00. I expected you home at 5:00)

Step 2:

State how you feel. Not what you think!

(example: I felt worried and scared and now I feel kind of angry!)

Step 3:

State what you need based on that feeling. Be careful that you don't make a request here of the other person. Think of what is important to you and express your needs as a value.

(example: It is important to me that I know where you are to keep you safe.)

Step 4:

Make a request of the other person. A request means that you are prepared to hear a “no.” A demand means that you aren't. If you hear a “no” it may be time to move onto conflict resolution.

(example: Please call me if you are going to be late.)

Speaking Checklist

Think of a recent situation and rate your own behaviour.

Speaking Don'ts		Speaking Do's	
	I reacted rather than responded (let my emotions take over)?		My body language was consistent with how I felt and did not get aggressive.
	I spoke in extremes using words such as always, never, everybody, nobody, all, etc.?		I left the fighting words out.
	I let my feelings taint my perceptions?		I just observed what I saw or heard.
	I blamed the other person for my feelings?		I stated my own feelings and needs.
	I gunny sacked - brought in a whole lot of issues from the past?		I didn't allow other issues to come into play.
	I talked too long?		I kept it brief.
	I made a lot of assumptions about how the person felt or thought, and what they intended?		I respected the other person's emotional privacy by not make assumptions.
	I attempted to control or manipulate?		I was assertive and clear about my issues.
	I spoke way over their head?		I spoke at my child's level.
	I didn't even address the issue or say what I wanted to say?		I was very specific about the issue and made a specific request.
	I wasn't totally open and honest?		I was appropriately honest.

Again, give people the freedom to share if they want to, but to keep it private if they prefer to.

Communication Circle

- a) When you walk away while I am talking
- b) When you commented on my weight
- c) I see milk on the counter.
- d) When the baby-sitter didn't show up....
- e) When I walk into this room and see things put away in their place.....
- f) I see you crying....

- a) I feel hurt and annoyed.....
- b) I felt embarrassed and hurt....
- c) and that makes me feel annoyed
- d) I felt so disappointed
- e) I feel so relaxed and grateful....
- f) and imagine you are feeling hurt.

1. Observation:
Only specific examples of what we see or hear.

2. Feelings:
Not what you think.

4. Request:
A specific, positive request or offer a choice.

3. Needs:
What you want, value, desire – or thoughts that are creating your feelings.

- a) Can you sit with me for a minute?
- b) Would you please stop commenting on my weight!
- c) please put it in the fridge.
- d) I am going to call someone else.
- e) Thanks.
- f) Would you like me to sit with you or would you like to be by yourself for a while?

- a) because when I see that, I think you don't care. (thoughts)
- b) because I need to be accepted for who I am and to feel free of judgment. (what matters)
- c) because I don't like to waste food.... (values)
- d) because I was really looking forward to an evening out! (desires)
- e) I enjoy a tidy house. (wants)
- f) are you needing to talk?

I Statements: **a)** help us set limits **b)** teach people how to treat us **c)** allow us to express values **d)** give us clarity to get our own needs met **e)** help us express sincere praise **f)** allow us to express empathy

Take Turns when you Speak

Another very important part of communication is learning to take turns. Too often people talk over each other thinking of what they want to say rather than listening. We need to identify our role as either listener or speaker and stick to that as much as we can until both people are ready to change places.

Speaker and Listener Exchange Places When:

- The speaker feels s/he has been heard and understood
- The speaker has finished what s/he has to say
- The speaker can no longer formulate his/her thoughts
- The speaker wants to hear the other person's viewpoint
- The listener's own thoughts or feelings are making him/her unable to listen.

Notice that it is almost always the speaker who should end his or her turn, rather than the listener.

This material can be reviewed every week when referring to any other part of the LIFE material. Parents need lots of practice to get to a place of feeling comfortable with the language. You can ask them to give examples of how they could state their limits or concerns.