

### Using I Messages During Conflict Transformation or Mediation

“The only time you ever have in which to learn anything or see anything or feel anything, or express any feeling or emotion, or respond to an event, or grow, or heal, is this moment, because this is the only moment any of us ever gets. You’re only here now; you’re only alive in this moment.”

–Jon Kabat Zinn

#### Introduction:

One major cause of escalating conflict is **you** messages. **You** messages tend to create defensive postures that block listening and ultimately good resolutions. When disputants have been reminded to attack the problem rather than the person, and all else fails, one way to help them return to a more productive communication style is to ask them to try to use “I” messages.

#### Procedure:

**I Message** cards help disputants who have difficulty in expressing feelings or who have difficulty following the peer mediation guidelines. **I Message** Cards serve as prompts to get conflict positive communication going in the right direction during mediation. Phrases, such as the following, are placed on index cards to be shown to disputants when appropriate:

Ask disputants to take a minute to review the **I Message** Cards and use one of the cards to restate or reframe their message.

I feel.....  
Because (describe specific experiences).....

#### OR:

I feel.....  
When (describe specific events).....

### Words that convey positive emotional experiences

amused	fortunate	proud
appeased	friendly	silly
blissful	glad	trusting
calm	gracious	
cheerful	grateful	
compassionate	happy	
content	hopeful	
curious	inspired	
delighted	joyous	
related	loved	
enthusiastic	loving	
excited	nice	

### Words that convey negative emotional responses

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abandoned	cold	horrified
afraid	confused	hurt
aggravated	cruel	irritated
alone	depressed	insulted
angry	disappointed	jealous
anguished	disgusted	regretful
anxious	dismayed	sad
appalled	distrustful	spiteful
ashamed	fearful	tense
betrayed	foolish	timid
bored	enraged	uneasy
	excluded	
	fearful	
	frustrated	

After using I Message Cards to describe problems and concerns, the disputants attempt to return to the mediation or conflict transformation process