
“I” Messages About Money

A Can of Worms

Talking things over isn't always easy. It can be especially difficult to talk about money. However, preventing and overcoming money problems takes honest and candid communication. This means expressing feelings and concerns without insulting or fighting. This activity can help family members start talking about money issues and to be more specific about their feelings instead of blaming them on others.

1. Prepare in advance.

- Cut out enough message slips for the family. (Cut up a photocopy of the attached list, or copy the sample questions by hand.)
- Schedule a time for everyone who wants to participate to get together. If someone doesn't want to play, don't try to force him/her.

2. Explain:

- I-messages are a way to express feelings without blaming other people for the way you feel.
- It's against the rules to use I-Messages to criticize, blame, insult or say mean things about each other.
- It's also against the rules to make fun of or argue with somebody because of what they say when they use an I-message.

3. To play the game, follow these directions:

- Fold the slips of paper and put them in a bowl or pile them on the table.
- Each player takes a turn drawing a slip (worm) from the can and filling in the blanks as s/he reads it aloud.
- Read the sample I-Message so everyone understands how they work.
- End the game after each person has had at least two turns. Suggest family members make up their own I-Messages the next time they have something to tell each other.

HINTS: If someone can't follow the rules, it's better to end the game than to argue about it. Those who want to play can try it again later.

OPTION: You can use the I-Message slips on a one-to-one basis with individual family members instead of playing the game with everyone.



Can of Worms

Sample: I'm glad that we're playing this game because I like doing things with my family.

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I'm happy that we have money to _____
because _____.

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I'd like to see us spend less money on _____
because _____.

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I'd like to see us spend more money on _____
because _____.

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When it comes to money, I feel good about _____
because _____.

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One thing I'm glad I bought is _____
because _____.

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When I think about money, I'm happy about _____
because _____.

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When it comes to money, I'm disappointed that _____
_____ because _____.