

Children's Connection Curriculum

**Session Topic:** Social Skills / Interactions – Friendships, Peer/Peer, Peer/Adult; Self-Esteem – Feelings (When we get along – Activity 2)

**Developmental Level:** Elementary School and Middle School

**Purpose:** To teach children how to express their feelings, wants, and needs by using simple “I messages”

**Materials Needed:** (Optional) Book: We Can Get Along by Lauren Murphy Payne, M.S.W., illustrations by Claudia Rohling, M.S.W.

**Description of Session:** Read part or all of book (optional). Introduce “I messages” by saying: *Sometimes we don't feel happy and safe when we are with another person. We feel sad or angry or upset. We need to tell the other person how we feel. We need to do this without blaming the other person, because blaming can make a conflict even worse. When we say things like, “YOU make me sad”, or “YOU make me angry”, or “YOU make me upset”, we are blaming the other person. That can make the other person feel like defending himself or herself. The other person might answer, “No, YOU make ME feel that way!” Now you are having an argument! There's a better way to tell the other person how you feel. You can use an “I message”. This is easy to do. Instead of starting off by saying, “YOU...,” start off by saying “I...” Here are some examples:*

- *I feel sad when you don't want to play with me.*
- *I feel angry when I can't share your toys.*
- *I feel upset when you make faces at me.*

*You can also use “I messages” to tell what you want or need from the other person, in ways like these:*

- *I want you to stop making faces at me.*
- *I need you to share the ball or I can't play.*

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What was a time that you didn't get along with someone else?
2. Can you think of some “I messages” you can use the next time that happens?
3. How could you role-play different situations in which a person could use “I messages”?
4. How do people know what we feel, want, or need?

**Reference:** A Leader's Guide to We Can Get Along by Lauren Payne, M.S.W., and Claudia Rohling, M.S.W., p. 7-10