FOCUS ON "I" NOT "YOU"

PURPOSE: One of the most common mistakes we make during conflict is focusing too much of our attention on the other person. When we use "you" language, it causes defensiveness. Using "I" language helps because it avoids laying blame while opening the door to empathy.

INSTRUCTIONS: Think of an actual or hypothetical scenario in which you want to tell another person how their actions impacted you. Then practice writing an "I" statement for your scenario using the framework below.

"I" Statement Framework

• When you… (describe the action)

• I feel…because I… (state the effect without blame)

• What I would prefer is… (state your preference)

Example: "When you raise your voice, I feel agitated because I can't concentrate. What I would prefer is for you to lower your voice so I can help you better."

Shifting From "You" Language to "I" Language

• Typical "you" language: "You need to keep your dog under control!"

• Reframed to "I" language: "When I push my stroller past your fence, the dog barks and wakes up my napping child, causing me and my child all kinds of distress. I'm wondering what could be done to solve that problem."

Your Scenario

• When you _____

• I feel_____ because I _____

• What I would prefer is_____