

How To Tell Somebody Something They'd Rather Not Hear

and how to say something you'd rather not say, that is, how to...

EXPRESS FEELINGS, OFFER HELP or ASK FOR HELP in areas such as these:

light-to-serious stuff like ...

- dirty dishes in the sink
- somebody cutting in a checkout line
- inconsiderate coworkers, roommates or family members
- school or work concerns
- money matters / time issues

and really serious stuff like ...

- life transitions
- dishonesty
- drinking & other drug use
- eating disorders / sleep disorders
- mental health concerns
- harassment / bullying
- violence in relationships

We use a conversational formula that reflects the three aspects of our experience:

emotion, action, thought in the order they usually occur, feelings first, then behavior (doing or saying something), then thought (why the behavior causes our concern, *not* why the person did what they did). This formula helps us sort through our own feelings and thoughts and express them effectively. See feelings list, over.

Avoid the phrase 'I feel *that*...' since this skips expressing feelings, the key element!

I feel ... about ... because

Fill the blanks as appropriate, 'making a nasty sandwich with nice bread,' where the middle part is the troublesome or troubling behavior. 'Wrap the sandwich' with permission at the start ("Can we talk now?") and gratitude at the end ("Thanks for listening"). It is helpful to practice the formula in advance with short role plays. Tell the truth!

"Could we talk for a few minutes? I've been **feeling** annoyed **about** your leaving stuff all over the living room **because** the space is more pleasant for us – and when we have company – if it's in good order."

"Is this a good time? I **feel** concerned **about** your sleeping so much **because** you have missed some important classes" and follow up with questions, such as: "Is there anything troubling you that you can tell me about?" OR "I wonder if maybe you are feeling depressed."

"I need some help and wonder if you could listen to my concern. I've been **feeling** concerned **about** myself **because**... and I'd like you to listen."

Suggest a next step (one or more possible solutions) or a consequence, if appropriate. Thank the person for listening.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Please visit our website www.parentsforum.org

I feel... about... because....

A

abandoned
accepted
adamant
affectionate
afraid
agonized
alarmed
alienated
ambivalent
angry
annoyed
anxious
apathetic
appreciated
astounded
attractive
awed
awkward

B

bad
beaten
beautiful
betrayed
bewildered
bitter
blissful
bold
bored
brave
burdened

C

cared for
comfortable
concerned
confident
confused
connected
cowardly

... C

creative
curious
D
deceitful
defeated
dejected
delighted
dependent
depressed
deprived
desperate
destructive
determined
devoted
different
diminished
disappointed
discontented
disgusted
disrespected
distracted
distraught
disturbed
divided
dominated
doubtful

E

eager
ecstatic
elated
electrified
embarrassed
empty
enchanted
energetic
envious
evasive
evil

... E

exasperated
excited
exhausted
exhilarated

F

fearful
flustered
foolish
frantic
free
friendless
frightened
frustrated

G

glad
good
grateful
gratified
greedy
guilty
gullible

H

happy
hateful
helpful
helpless
homesick
honored
hopeful
hopeless
horrible
hostile
hurt
hysterical

I

ignored
immobilized

... I

impatient
imposed upon
impressed
inadequate
incompetent
inconsistent
in control
indecisive
independent
infatuated
inferior
infuriated
inhibited
insecure
insincere
inspired
intimidated
involved
isolated

J

jealous
joyous

L

lazy
left out
lonely
lovable
loving
loyal

M

manipulated
miserable
misunderstood

N

needy
nervous

O

odd
opposed
optimistic
outraged
overlooked
overwhelmed

P

panicked
paranoid
peaceful
persecuted
petrified
pleasant
pleased
possessive
preoccupied
pressured

Q

quarrelsome
quiet

R

refreshed
regretful
rejected
relaxed
relieved
remorseful

S

sad
satisfied
scared
separate
settled
sexy
shocked
shy

... S

silly
sluggish
special
strained
stunned
stupid
sure
T
tempted
tense
threatened
thwarted
tired
torn
touchy
trapped
troubled

U

unappreciated
uncertain
undecided
uneasy
unsettled
uptight
used

V

violent
vivacious
vulnerable

W

wonderful
worried

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