

don't insist on others agreeing with your point of view.

Say What You Feel

There are numerous nonverbal ways to be direct about feeling: sneering, crying, slamming doors, and banging tables. But, if your actions aren't supported by feeling statements, they can be misinterpreted. Get in the habit of putting your emotions into words. Instead of yelling, "You never help me clean," say "I feel frustrated when..." or use expressions like "nervous, angry, surprised, pleased, and hopeful." Talking about how you feel about another person's actions can be valuable feedback for that person.

Say What You Want - Offer to Negotiate

Most wants can be negotiated by stating them clearly and fairly, and inviting help to make them happen. Avoid demanding or using "I need," or "you should." Most people like to feel helpful, not obligated. Instead of saying "You should be playing cards in the lounge" try "I'd like to have a couple of hours for quiet study in our room in the evening. Could we decide on a time that would be convenient for both of us?" Being direct about what you want doesn't guarantee you'll get it, but it certainly improves your chances when the other person knows exactly what you want and that you're willing to compromise.

Ordinarily, following these steps will get negotiations going, and result in a satisfactory compromise. If not, you may want to have another plan in mind that doesn't depend on the other person and say what you intend to do. "Since I cannot have quiet study time in our room, I will study in the library," or "I will request a single room," or whatever you

consider bottom line options for yourself if a compromise cannot be reached. People who make such action statements (in the least threatening manner possible) are in touch with their own wants and needs and willing to take responsibility for them.

In the coming weeks, try to become aware of speaking for yourself with your roommate as well as friends, teachers, advisors and parents. Begin to notice how many of your statements beginning with the pronoun "you" could be restated by beginning with "I." Incorporate the other steps later as needed. Good luck with your efforts to communicate. I hope you get some sleep and keep the friendship with your roommate as well.



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Communication *between roommates*



Dear Counselor,

This year I'm rooming with my best friend from high school. I thought it was a great idea since we already knew each other and there wouldn't be any nasty surprises. Was I ever wrong! I'm quiet - she's noisy; I'm neat - she throws her clothes all over the room; and every time I start to study, she comes in with her friends and they laugh and play cards all night. We're still terrific friends, but something's got to change or I'll never get my homework done or get any sleep. How can I talk to her without

Dear Can't Communicate,

Isn't communication interesting? Two people can be friends for years - talking and getting their messages across. Then a negatively charged situation arises and nothing seems to work. Sometimes fear stops us from saying what we'd like - as you said, being afraid we'll anger the other person or hurt their feelings. Also the thought that "she already knows this - she won't listen - nothing will change anyway." These concerns are very real. So is the possibility that your roommate

Speaking for yourself establishes YOU as the sole authority of YOUR experience and declares that YOUR observations, thoughts, and feelings have value.

Say What You Observe

Describe in a factual way what you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. "This morning I came back from class and found your dirty clothes on my bed, a wet towel on the rug, and potato chip bags on my desk." These are facts = not judgments. Such statements provide

How can I talk to her without hurting her feelings?

hurting her feelings or making her mad - I've tried a couple of times but nothing ever changes.

Can't Communicate



really doesn't know the seriousness of your concerns. Here's a way to effectively communicate your problems and concerns to her - making them a part of the message and likely having some positive effect on the situation.

Speak for Yourself

Use "I, me, my, or mine" messages. There should be no question that you're describing any experience other than your own. Instead of saying, "You were noisy again last night," try "I feel upset when our room is noisy in the evenings." You might even preface it by saying, "I have something to tell you and I'm afraid I might hurt your feelings."

background for your listener, making it easier to understand your upcoming interpretation. The more specific you can be, the more effective your communication becomes.

Say What You Think

Communicate your view of the situation with an interpretative statement. Use caution here. Just beginning with an "I" doesn't qualify your statement as an "I" message. Don't say, "I think you are inconsiderate." Try instead, "It seems possible to me that you don't know I'm studying." Although interpretative statements do evaluate people and events, that doesn't negate them as expressions of your experience. By speaking for yourself, you make it obvious that you