NEW MEXICO 4-H

Aggie Next Step

Conflict: Communication Skills

I FEEL
_____

WHEN
_____

WHAT I NEED IS
_____

BECAUSE
_____
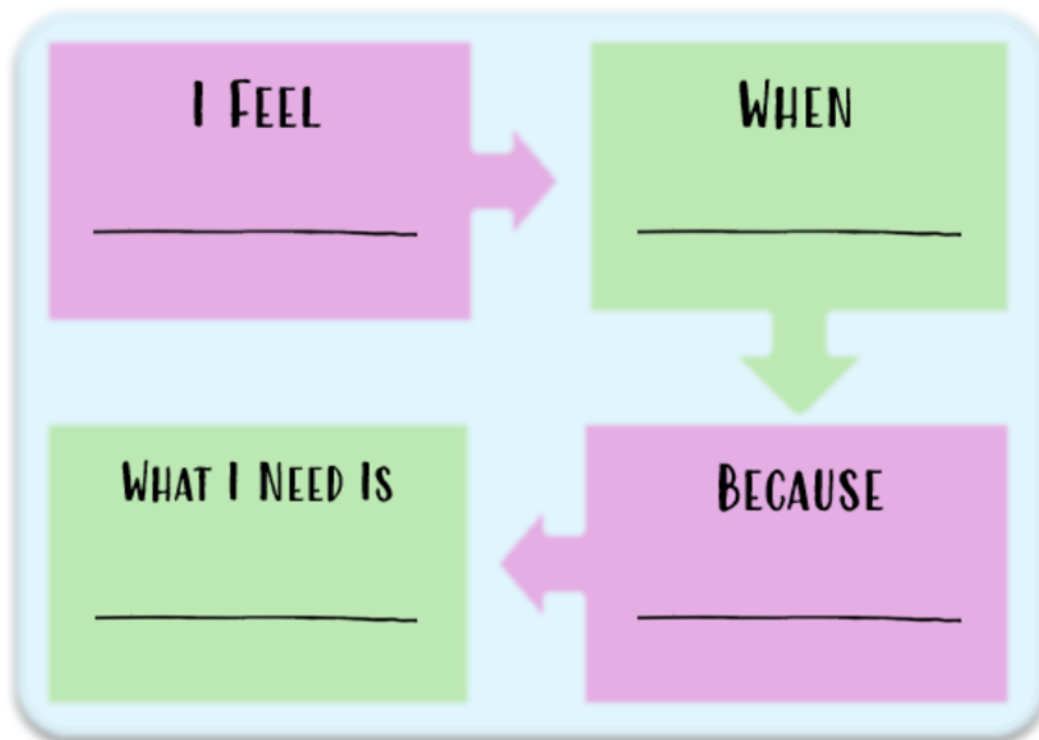
Post Secondary Pathways

Newt McCarty, State 4-H Agent and Chelsey Juenemann, Education Specialist

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College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
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Conflict: Communication Skills

INTRODUCTION

Conflict often starts with how we communicate rather than what we're trying to say. The words we choose can either calm a situation or make it work. In this lesson, participants will learn to express feelings clearly and respectfully using "I" messages instead of "You" messages. This shifts the focus from blame to problem-solving – a skill that's valuable at school, at work, and in everyday life.

Supplies
- Worksheets
- Handouts
- Pens/Pencils

SET UP

Review lesson materials and determine which worksheets and handouts you will use for the lesson. Print enough pre/post assessments, worksheets, and handouts for each participant.

OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:
- **Identify** the difference between "You" messages and "I" messages.
- **Explain** how communication style influences conflict resolution.
- **Reframe** "You" statements into effective "I" messages.
- **Demonstrate** respectful communication through role-play or written scenarios.
- **Reflect** on how positive communication skills support success in school and the workplace.

ACTIVITY

1. Have participants complete the *Pre-assessment*.

2. Begin with a brief discussion:

> Q: *Think about a recent disagreement – at school, work, or home. What made it better or worse?*

Chart responses and highlight key patterns (tone, assumptions, emotions).

3. Define *conflict communication*: how people express needs, feelings, and solutions during a disagreement. Emphasize: *In school or career settings, HOW you say something can be as important as WHAT you say.*

4. Distribute *Vocabulary of Feelings* handout. Briefly review several words in both positive and negative categories. Ask:

> Q: *Why is being able to name your feelings important when resolving conflicts?*
> Q: *What happens if we skip that step?*

Summarize: *Recognizing emotions helps prevent defensive reactions and keeps communication constructive.*

5. Distribute *How and When to Use "I" Messages* handout. Review and discuss how "I" messages focus on the situation, not the person, reducing blame and defensiveness.

6. Distribute the *Turning You Messages Into I Messages.* Allow time for participants to rewrite examples individually or in pairs. Discuss as a group:
> *Q: Which examples were hardest to rewrite?*
> *Q: How did the tone change when you used "I" messages?*

7. Divide participants into pairs, if they are not already. Distribute the *"You" Message Scenarios.* Instruct pairs to read each scenario (or assign 1 per pair) and rewrite the scenario as an "I" message. If time allows, invite 3-4 pairs to role-play a scenario.

8. Wrap-up by reinforcing that *clear, respectful communication lays the groundwork for positive outcomes. Effective communication helps identify both people's needs, which is key to solving problems cooperatively*.

9. *Exit Ticket* – depending on time, this can be done as a class discussion, or students can complete the worksheet in class, as homework, or in the following class.

10. Have participants complete *Post-assessment*.

WRAP UP

When we take responsibility for our own feelings and communicate them respectfully, we open the door to cooperation instead of conflict. "I" messages help others listen, understand, and respond more positively. The more we practice this skill, the easier it becomes to turn tense situations into opportunities for teamwork and understanding.

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RESOURCES

NM Standards:

NM PED Standards: Career and Technical Education (CTE):
CTE 2.1.1: Select and employ appropriate reading and communication strategies
CTE 2.1.2: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems to enhance communication in the workplace
CTE 2.1.9: Listen to and speak with diverse individuals to enhance communication skills
CTE 3.1.1: Employ critical thinking skills to solve problems and make decisions
CTE 3.1.2: Employ critical thinking and interpersonal skills to resolve conflicts
CTE 3.2.1: Understand problem-solving techniques
CTE 9.1.1: Identify and demonstrate the use of positive work behaviors and personal qualities needed to be employable

Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) Standards: Career Ready Practices (CRP):
CRP-1: Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee
CRP-4: Communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason
CRP-8: Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them

Optional ELA Alignment (Grades 6-12)
SL1: Participate in a range of conversations and collaborations

Video Resources:

Note: Please preview all videos before showing them to students to ensure they are age-appropriate, relevant, and aligned with your classroom needs.

I Messages
https://youtu.be/s1ptGEE6u88?si=itXgCjRduqzXNO-5

"I" Statements | Open Up | How We Communication
https://youtu.be/Tu4_bjLlBok?si=UgOIZLfgnoVqqX5k

Assertive Communication – Using "I" Statements
https://youtu.be/SorqWJUHbjM?si=H-N0kDYQBFS3fWtr