† COMMUNICATING FEELINGS †

RULES FOR COMMUNICATING FEELINGS

Take responsibility for your own feelings.
No one can make you feel anything. We can chose how we react to what other people do.

Be honest with yourself. Be aware of what's going on inside you.

Start with what is real for you. Don't blame or dump your feelings on to other people.

Be specific. Describe the other person's actions at one time and place, and how you feel about that. This avoids attacking a whole person and stops arguments escalating.

Listen to others, especially to the feelings behind the words.

Make time to share properly. Ensure each person has a fair chance to talk and respond.

FEELING TALK

1. Start with your feelings.
Try to identify the root emotion, as well as the surface ones. For example I may be aware of being irritable and grumpy, but under the surface I might be feeling angry, and afraid of being useless and rejected. The clearer we can be about what's going on for us, the better our communication will be.

"I feel ... "

2. Say what you observe about the other person's actions.
What you perceive the other person doing may not be what they intend or see. Being specific helps to clarify our different perspectives on what is happening.

"... when you ..."

3. Say what you need.
Again, claim your own feelings and needs. Don't speak for the other person, or guilt trip with "If only you loved me you would ...". Think about what would help you to feel better.

"I need ..."

PRACTICE
Think of a conflict situation you have at home. Write a statement to the other person in this form.

I feel ...

when you ...

I need ...