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Improving Drug Abuse Treatment for AIDS-Risk Reduction (DATAR).

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Institute of Behavioral Research
Texas Christian University
TCU Box 298740
Fort Worth, TX 76129
(817) 257-7226
(817) 257-7290 (FAX)
Email: ibr@tcu.edu
Web site: <http://www.ibr.tcu.edu>

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Skills for Better Relationships

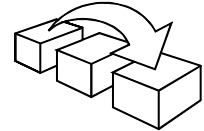
Participants will:

Understand the difference between I-statements and You-statements

Explore common communication roadblocks

Identify and practice listening skills

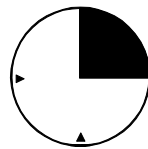
Objectives



Procedure

Step	Segment Name	Time
1	Welcome and review of weekly recovery issues	30 minutes
2	Topic introduction: Improving relationships	5 minutes
3	Discussion and exercise: Understanding I-statements	25 minutes
4	Break	10 minutes
5	Open discussion: Communication Roadblocks	20 minutes
6	Exercise and discussion: I'm all ears	20 minutes
7	Closure and evaluation	10 minutes
Session Length		2 hours (120 minutes)

Session Structure



Group Leader Materials and Preparation



◆ Materials:

Flip chart or chalkboard
Markers or chalk
Pencils and paper for participants

◆ Prepare before class:



I-STATEMENTS AND YOU-STATEMENTS

Use a sheet of flip chart paper to list some of the comparisons on p. 102 as shown:

I-STATEMENTS AND YOU-STATEMENTS

You're lying!

I don't believe what you're saying.

You hurt my feelings!

I felt hurt by what you said.



COMMUNICATION ROADBLOCKS

Use a sheet of flip chart paper to write out the roadblocks as shown: (Handout shown on p. 115. Discussion begins on p. 104.)

COMMUNICATION ROADBLOCKS

We assume people know what we're talking about.

We assume people know what we're feeling.

We don't listen well.

We sometimes overreact to what people say.

We're not always clear about saying, "No."

Prepare the **Using I-statements** exercise (p. 114) by cutting the role play situations into strips.

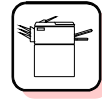
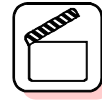
◆ **Make copies:**

Understanding I-statements handout (p. 113)

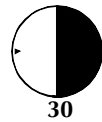
Communication Roadblocks handout (p. 115)

Session Three Evaluation (pp. 116-117)

Weekly Recovery Journal (p. 18 — Session 1)



**Procedure
Steps**



30

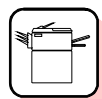
Step 1

Welcome and review of recovery issues

◆ **Welcome participants** as they arrive.

◆ **Introduce the session topic.** Explain that the session will introduce ideas for improving relationships. Poor communication often gets in the way of our best attempts to get along with others. The purpose of today's session is to take a look at some things that contribute to communication problems and discuss ideas for overcoming those difficulties.

◆ **Open the discussion period for weekly recovery issues.** Encourage participants to use their *Weekly Recovery Journals* to keep notes for this discussion time, and to help keep themselves focused on recovery during the week.



◆ **Begin by going around the room to ask each participant:** "What is one thing you did in the last week (no matter how small) that really helped your recovery efforts?" Express support, encouragement, and appreciation for each speaker's contribution. Set a tone for the group that encourages participants to do likewise.

- ◆ **Ask about the specific assignment from the previous week:** What did you notice about other people’s use of passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles? **Encourage participants to share other issues from their journals, as well.** Keep discussions focused on recovery, finding solutions to recovery-related problems, and sharing successes (“what works”).



Step 2

Topic introduction: Improving relationships

- ◆ **Reintroduce the session topic and the purpose of the session using key points from the following script:**

SCRIPT:
*Session Topic
and Goals*

Communication plays a central role in our relationships. Often it’s not so much **what** we say, but rather **how** we say it that leads to problems. We spend about ninety percent of our time communicating in some way with other people. However, we’re not always successful in getting our message across. When we don’t send and receive clear messages, communication breaks down. When communication breaks down, we’re sometimes left feeling frustrated, confused, and angry.

This idea of sending and receiving messages is the basis of communication. A conversation or discussion with another person involves a series of messages sent and received by both people. A message has a verbal part (words, expressions, tone of voice) and a nonverbal part (gestures, eye contact, posture). Breakdowns can happen when we don’t send a clear message or when the other person doesn’t send a clear message. Likewise, communication breaks down when we don’t fully understand the other person’s message or when the other person doesn’t fully understand our message.

Communication can break down for other reasons, too. For starters, when we’re under the influence of drugs or alcohol we are less able to send and receive

messages clearly. Here are some other factors that can influence how well we communicate: illness, lack of sleep, lack of interest, poor self-esteem, anger and other intense emotions, distractions, boredom, and the feelings we have for the person with whom we are communicating.

In today's sessions we'll look at some ideas for improving our ability to send and receive clearer messages and avoid communication breakdowns.

Step 3

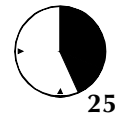
Discussion and exercise: *Understanding I-statements*

◆ **Conduct a brief review of the differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive communications styles.** Ask group members who were present at the last session what they remember about the three communication styles. **List their responses on flip chart or chalkboard and provide clarification as needed.** Remind them the assertive option has the best effect on others and is more likely to enhance relationships. However, there may be times when using another style is the right thing to do.

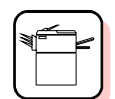
◆ **Begin the discussion of *I-statements*** by noting that *I-statements* are considered the best way to send a clear message to others about your feelings, ideas, beliefs, and needs.

◆ **Distribute the *Understanding I-statements* handout** and discuss the differences between *I-statements* and *You-statements*. **Use key points from the following script to lead the discussion:**

I-statements are direct, assertive expressions of your feelings, thoughts, ideas, needs, preferences, etc. They're called *I-statements* because they speak for you. These statements express your point of view. They're also called *I-statements* because they begin with the word "I."



25



SCRIPT:
Understanding I-statements

SCRIPT:
Understanding
I-statements
 (continued)



Comparing
You-
statements
and
I-statements

The easiest way to understand *I-statements* is to compare them with *You-statements*. *You-statements* are usually indirect and aggressive. They come across as being accusatory, blaming, and judgmental. We're most likely to use *You-statements* when we're feeling hurt, angry, or embarrassed. Unfortunately, when you send a message in the form of a *You-statement*, the receiver is apt to respond in an angry or defensive way. When this happens, communication breaks down.

Here are some *You-statements* and *I-statements* for comparison. **(Use a prepared flip chart showing these comparisons to highlight the differences. See p. 98)**

You make me angry when you're late!
I'm feeling angry because you're late!

You're lying!
I don't believe what you're saying.

You're an inconsiderate slob!
I'd like for you to be more considerate.

You hurt my feelings!
I felt hurt by what you said.

You should have known better.
I'm disappointed that things turned out this way.

Learning to use *I-statements* can help us improve communication and avoid many roadblocks. Much like learning a new language, *I-statements* take time and practice. The key is to shift away from a blaming, judgmental attitude (*You-statements*) toward an attitude of speaking only for yourself (*I-statements*).

Take care not to use *You-statements* that are cleverly disguised as *I-statements*. For example, "**I think you're an inconsiderate slob**" is really no different than "**You're an inconsiderate slob**" even though it begins with the word "I." The main idea is to speak for yourself and also avoid blaming or judging others. A "true" *I-statement* might instead sound like "**I don't appreciate what you did**" or even "**I don't like the way you've been behaving.**"

◆ **Introduce the *Using I-statements* exercise by suggesting to participants that practice is the best way to learn.** Give each participant a slip of paper that describes a situation. Ask them to read their situations to themselves and think of possible responses using *You-statements* and *I-statements*.



A page of sample situations is included on page 114 at the end of this session. These situations are laid out so they can be easily copied and cut into slips.

NOTE!

◆ **Next, ask participants to choose a partner.** During the exercise, partners will direct their *I-statements* and *You-statements* to each other. Go around the room and have each person read his or her situation aloud, then respond to the situation using a *You-statement*. Next, go around the room again. Ask participants to restate their situations, and this time respond with an *I-statement*. Offer encouragement and praise, and provide clarification as needed.

◆ **Process the exercise with some of the following questions:**

What differences did you notice between the *I-statements* and the *You-statements*?

Which approach did you prefer using? Which one did you prefer receiving?

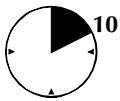
What could you do to help yourself remember to use *I-statements*?

What might get in your way in using *I-statements*? What could you do to overcome it?

How do you suppose your friends or family members will respond if you use more *I-statements*?

Discussion Questions

◆ **Thank participants for their input.** Summarize by noting that most people have certain communication “habits,” or ways of communicating. Our communication “habits” become almost second nature over the years so that we’re often not fully aware of how we come across when we speak and listen to others. Using *I-statements* is a good habit to develop if your goal is to communicate more effectively with others.



Step 4

Break

◆ **Allow a 10 minute break.**



Step 5

Open discussion: *Communication Roadblocks*



◆ **Begin by asking participants to help you make a list of communication difficulties.** Use flip chart or chalkboard to list the responses. Discuss each communication issue mentioned, asking for examples or clarification as needed. **Prompt with some of the following questions:**

Discussion Questions

What are some reasons why people don’t always communicate well?

What is your own personal “pet peeve” in communication? What really irritates you?

Do you have any “bad” communication habits you’d like to break?

How can you tell when you are communicating really well with someone?

Summarize by mentioning that communicating well with another person is not always easy. For all of us there are “roadblocks” that sometimes get in the way. During the remainder of the session we’ll explore some ways around the most common communication roadblocks.

◆ **Distribute the *Communication Roadblocks* handout,** and refer to the flip chart outline of the key points to lead the discussion. Explain why each point can contribute to poor communication, and encourage participants to give examples or make comments.

◆ **Use some of the following information to build your discussion of each point.** Process questions are also included.

❖ **We assume people know what we’re talking about.**

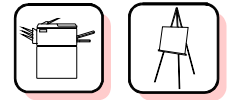
Our own thoughts and ideas are usually very clear to us. As a result, we sometimes don’t explain things well or we use words or slang other people may not understand. We’ve all had experiences where we’re talking about one thing, and the person we’re talking with thinks we’re talking about something else.

This contributes to communication problems because it leads to misunderstanding. It can also result in both people feeling angry or frustrated. When people feel angry, frustrated, or misunderstood communication breaks down.

Ask these discussion questions:

What can we do to help overcome this roadblock?

How can we help make sure people understand what we’re saying?



**DISCUSSION:
*Communication
Roadblocks***

Point #1

**Discussion
Questions**

Point #2**Closure point:**

Accept that people won't always understand what you're saying. Be patient, and try not to get angry. Look for signs that your message was not understood or was taken in the wrong way. Be ready to clarify or repeat what you said in a different way.

❖ **We assume people know what we're feeling (or that they should!).**

It's normal to want understanding and sympathy from others, but it's not helpful to assume other people should know what we are feeling. We sometimes hear people say "*She should have known I was upset*" or "*If he really cared he would have known I was feeling blue.*" The truth is — no one is a mind reader. It's our responsibility to tell others what we're feeling.

When we assume others know what we're feeling, communication breaks down. Once again, the door is open for misunderstanding and anger. Also, we may experience hurt feelings because the other person didn't respond the way we wanted them to.

Ask these discussion questions:**Discussion Questions**

How can we overcome this communication barrier?
What can we do to express our feelings more clearly?

Closure point:

Even people who love you with all their hearts may not always know what you're feeling. Use *I-statements* to send a clear message about what you feel, and what you need.

❖ **We don't listen very well.**

Listening is hard work. Sometimes we don't listen well because we get distracted by things like the television set, the radio, or the baby crying in the next room. Sometimes we get distracted by our own thoughts — we begin to plan what we're going to say next while the other person is still talking. And sometimes we cut people off — we interrupt them or don't let them finish their thoughts.

Not listening is perhaps the biggest communication roadblock of all. If we don't listen well, we seldom truly understand what the other person has said. This leads to misunderstanding and confusion. The speaker may begin to feel insulted, frustrated, and angry. No one likes to be cut off in mid-sentence. Good communication depends on good listening.

Ask these discussion questions:

How can we overcome this communication barrier?
How can we improve our listening habits?

Closure point:

The best way to improve listening habits is to practice. Concentrate on what the other person is saying instead of your own thoughts and ideas. Catch yourself before you interrupt. If you're not willing to listen, use *I-statements* to say so. For example, *"I'm not able to concentrate on what you're saying right now because I'm watching the football game. Let's talk later."*

❖ **We sometimes overreact to what people say.**

When we don't care for another person's thoughts, ideas, or opinions we sometimes respond with anger or sarcasm. We may also stop listening and start debating, trying to prove our point of view is right. We may assume it's

Point #3

Discussion Questions

Point #4

Discussion Questions

alright to cut someone off in mid-sentence if we don't agree with them.

In this case, communication breaks down because we stop listening. This can be very damaging, especially in relationships with people we care about. If we constantly overreact to ideas or opinions that are different from ours we may wake up one day and find that no one wants to talk with us about anything except the weather!

Ask these discussion questions:

How can we overcome this communication barrier?
How can we avoid overreacting to what other people say?

Closure point:

Remember that **listening to** is different from **agreeing with**. Sometimes you may feel you have to interrupt just to show the other person how strongly you disagree. Of course, the choice is yours. Another choice is to stay calm, keep listening, then use *I-statements* to express your thoughts and feelings on the issue. (*"I hear what you're saying and I don't agree with you at all!"*)

Point #5**❖ We're not always clear about saying "no."**

This is often the case when we feel pulled in two directions (we want to say "no" and we also want to say "yes"). Sometimes we say "yes" when we really want to say "no," and then we feel angry and resentful about it. Other times we say "yes" when we want to say "no," then cancel at the last minute. Sometimes we let ourselves be pressured into saying "yes" because we want to be liked or not seen by others as "square."

Not being clear about saying “no” is a communication roadblock because it creates confusion. It can really be a roadblock when it causes us to feel angry and resentful, either at ourselves or toward others.

Ask these discussion questions:

How can we overcome this communication roadblock?
What’s the best way to say “no” clearly?

**Discussion
Questions**

Closure point:

Keep in mind that you have the right to say “no.” Develop a style for turning people down with which you feel comfortable. Ask for time to think when you need it so you won’t feel pressured. Use *I-statements* to help you deal with people who try to pressure you. For example, “*I’m not interested, thank you. I want you to quit asking me!*”

- ◆ **Thank participants for their input.** Encourage them to share this material with their partners or family members.

Step 6

Exercise and discussion: I’m all ears

- ◆ **Begin the exercise by again mentioning that listening is a key communication skill.** Remind participants that practice helps improve listening habits. Explain that the remainder of the session will be used as a listening practice session called “I’m all ears.”
- ◆ **Ask participants to help you quickly generate a list of good listening habits.**





Discussion Questions

- ◆ **Use flip chart or chalkboard to record responses.**
- ◆ **Ask these questions:**

How do you know when someone is really listening to you?

What really shows you that someone is listening?

- ◆ **Next ask participants to choose a partner.** Explain that each partner will be given three minutes to speak. Ask them to decide who will go first. Whoever goes first will talk for three minutes while the other listens, then they will change roles and the “listener” will become the “speaker.” Let them know you will keep time and remind them when to change roles.



Topics for the *I'm all ears* Exercise

- ◆ **Make a quick list of the following topics** on flip chart or chalkboard, and suggest that the speakers choose one of these topics to talk about:

How you met your current partner or spouse

A hobby or talent you're proud of

The funniest thing that ever happened to you

Your goals for the future

- ◆ **Remind the listeners** to use some of the ideas about good listening discussed earlier. Tell the listeners to signal the speakers by saying “*I'm all ears*” when they're ready to listen.
- ◆ **Monitor the time and have the partners switch roles at the end of three minutes.**

◆ **When the exercise is completed, process using some of the following questions:**

How did it feel to do this exercise?

When you were listening, what was the hardest thing for you to remember to do? What was the easiest?

When you were speaking, did you feel you were being listened to? What made you feel you were being heard?

What did you learn from this exercise?

**Process
Questions**

◆ **Provide closure by highlighting some of the key points from the following script:**

Communicating well is hard work. We're all guilty of communicating poorly from time to time. It's helpful to become aware of the things that get in the way of your ability to communicate effectively and to learn skills for overcoming those barriers. It can make a big difference, both in relationships and in the workplace.

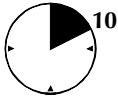
Many communication problems stem from poor listening habits. The best remedy is practice. Challenge yourself to practice listening well. Look for opportunities everyday to practice good listening.

I-statements help you speak clearly and honestly from your own point of view. Using more *I-statements* is a good communication habit. One good tip for learning to use *I-statements* is to remember to correct yourself when you use a *You-statement*. Another idea is to set an *I-statement* goal for yourself each day. For example, challenging yourself to make ten *I-statements* while at work.

SCRIPT:

*Summarizing
I'm all ears*

◆ **Thank participants for their input.**



Step 7

Closure/evaluation



- ◆ **Distribute a new *Weekly Recovery Journal* sheet** and encourage participants to continue using the journal to record their successes and challenges in recovery in the week to come.

- ◆ **Provide the following specific assignment:**

In the coming week practice using *I-statements* with one person with whom you feel comfortable. Use your journal to keep notes.

- ◆ **Go around the room quickly and ask participants to share the most important thing they learned from today's lesson.**

- ◆ **Briefly preview next week's session.**



- ◆ **Ask each person to complete an evaluation.** Thank people as they leave and extend an invitation to return next week.

UNDERSTANDING I-STATEMENTS

HOW DOES AN I-STATEMENT EXPRESS FEELINGS?

I feel...	I seem to be feeling...
I am feeling...	I enjoy feeling...
I felt...	I don't like feeling...

WHAT ELSE DOES AN I-STATEMENT EXPRESS?

I think...	I like...	I consider	I love
I believe...	I hope...	I will	I am
I want...	I wish...	I would	I do
I need...	I don't...	I won't	I can

HOW DO I USE I-STATEMENTS?

Speak for yourself. Communicate what you feel, think, or want without blaming or making assumptions about other people.

Begin your statements with the word "I," and express your feelings, thoughts, or needs in a manner that respects the other person.

Avoid beginning statements with the word "you." *You-statements* suggest blame, and may lead others to feel defensive.

EXAMPLES OF I-STATEMENTS AND YOU-STATEMENTS

You make me angry when you ignore me.
I feel angry when you ignore me.

You never let me use the car.
I want to use the car more often.

You should be more careful.
I would like for you to be more careful.

You make me worry when you're late.
I feel worried when you're late.

USING I-STATEMENTS



A friend comes over to your house holding after you have asked him several times not to bring drugs around.

A family member keeps bringing up your past mistakes.

Your partner complains about you attending your weekly group.

A friend borrows your car and keeps it for several days.

Your date for the evening invites you to smoke a joint.

A coworker who relieves your shift is often late.

Your aunt calls to chat, and keeps talking, and talking, and talking.

Your partner forgot to pay the electric bill, and the lights get turned off.

A coworker keeps borrowing your tools and not returning them.

Your partner makes a rude remark about your appearance.

COMMUNICATION ROADBLOCKS

We Assume People Know What We're Talking About...

But they don't always - so be patient!

Look for signs that your message was not understood or was taken the wrong way. If that's the case, try again to get your point across.

We Assume People Know What We're Feeling...

Don't count on it!

Use I-statements to send a clear, honest message about what you're feeling.

We Don't Listen Very Well...

Listening is hard work!

It helps to concentrate on what the other person is saying instead of your own thoughts and ideas.

We Sometimes Overreact to What People Say...

Especially when we disagree!

Listening doesn't mean agreeing. Stay calm. Listen and respond using I-statements to express your views.

We're Not Always Clear About Saying "No"...

Fence-sitting creates confusion!

Ask for time to think when you need it. Avoid saying "yes" when you want to say "no."

SESSION EVALUATION OF *STRAIGHT AHEAD*

SESSION 6

THIS BOX IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DATA COORDINATOR:

[FORM 75; CARD 01]

SITE # _ _ _	CLIENT ID# _ _ _ _ _ _	DATE: _ _ _ _ _ _	COUNSELOR ID# _ _ _
[5-6]	[7-12]	MO DAY YR [13-18]	[19-20]

Please answer these questions based on what you learned today. Select the best single answer.

1. Communication breaks down when:
 - (1) We assume people know what we're talking about
 - (2) We don't listen
 - (3) We overreact to what others say
 - (4) We use I-statements
 - (5) 1, 2, and 3 above | _ | [21]

2. An I-statement is considered rude and selfish. 0=True 1=False [22]

3. A good way to tell people what you're feeling is to:
 - (1) Use I-statements
 - (2) Yell and cause a scene
 - (3) Ask someone else to tell them
 - (4) 2 and 3 above
 - (5) All of the above | _ | [23]

4. Listening is only a small part of good communication. 0=True 1=False [24]

5. A You-statement is:
 - (1) Blaming and judgmental
 - (2) Likely to make others angry or defensive
 - (3) Okay to use with children
 - (4) 1 and 2 above
 - (5) None of the above | _ | [25]

Straight Ahead
 Session 6 Evaluation
 Page 2

For the following items, please circle the number on each line to show how you feel about this session.

Full	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Empty	[26]
Rough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Smooth	[27]
Weak	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Powerful	[28]
Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Tense	[29]
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable	[30]

Now circle the number on each line to show how you feel right now.

Pleased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Angry	[31]
Quiet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Aroused	[32]
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Confident	[33]
Excited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Calm	[34]
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable	[35]

If mapping was used in this session, place an “X” on each line to show your opinion about it.

Mapping was...

Interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninteresting	[36]
Difficult	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Easy	[37]
Comfortable ...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uncomfortable	[38]
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable	[39]

