

Shifting Gears ~ The Art of Getting Your Point Across

So far in previous articles we've discussed Empathic (active) Listening, I-Messages, and determining who owns the problem and the ABC of emotions (and subsequent behaviour). This week we are going to put all of these basic skills to action and use Shifting Gears to change unacceptable behaviours. Again, the key to using all these proactive powerful parenting skills is understanding when to use them and practice, practice, practice!

***"For things to change,
we must change".***

Henry David Thoreau

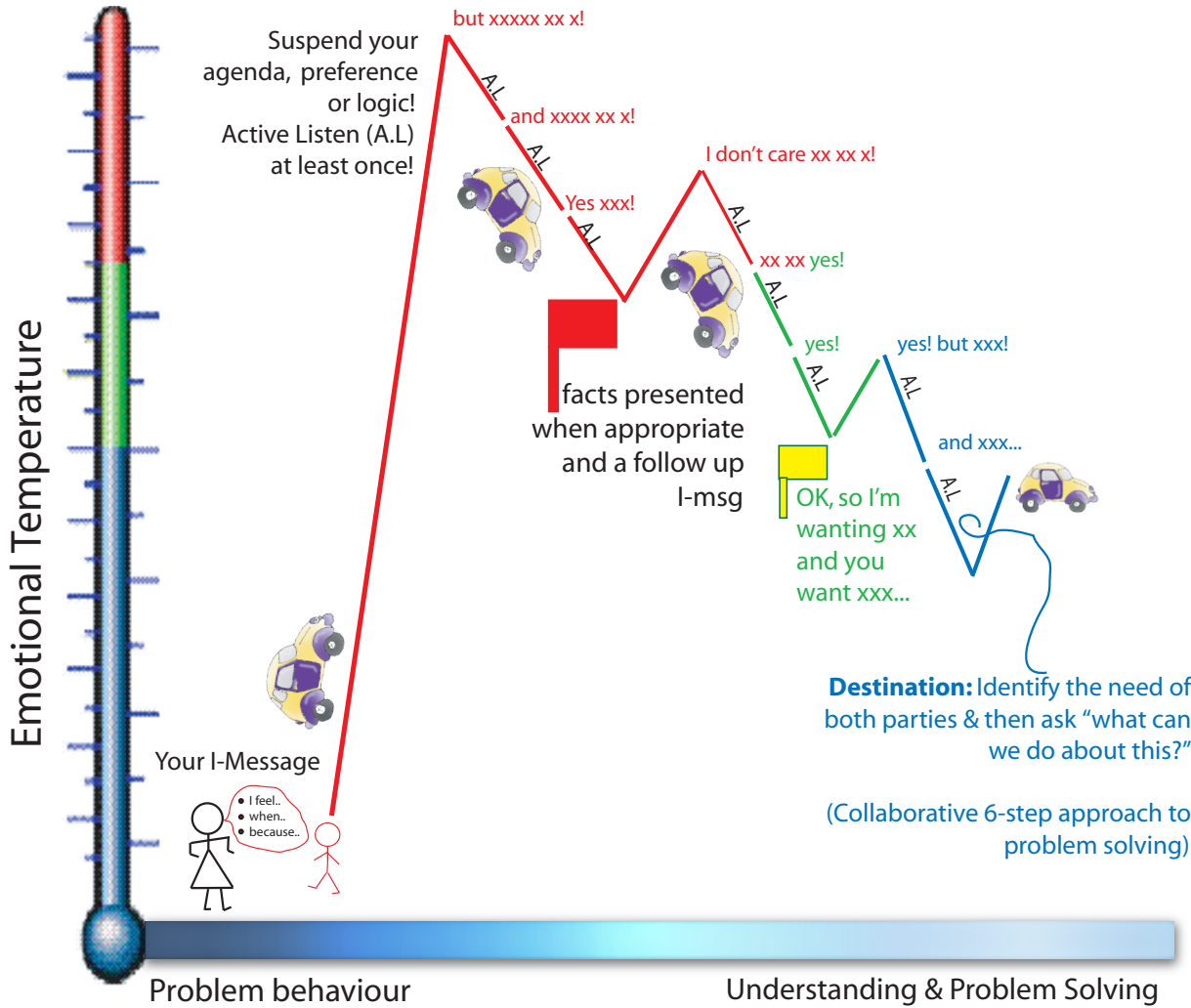
Now while I-messages produce less defensiveness from people than You-messages, no one likes to hear that their behaviour is causing you a problem. You can phrase it the nicest possible way and because you have pointed out their behaviour is unacceptable, you will be guaranteed a reaction! So where do you go from here? Well if you continued to repeat the I-Message, the child/other person's temperature will still continue to rise. To increase the likelihood that the behaviour will stop (meeting your need) means that you need to lower the temperature of their emotion.



Shifting Gears works by increasing your chances that your I-Message will be heard by you listening (empathetic) and acknowledging the child's/other person's feelings. It lowers the child's emotional temperature by allowing them to vent their feelings and providing them with a chance to go deeper and uncover the real issue behind the behaviour.

So as soon as you become aware that your I-Message has caused a problem (remember communication comes through words 7%, tonality 38% and body language 55% so you need to also be careful how you send it), shift gears into active listening. Essentially your





I-Message has passed the problem onto them and you can now help them through it by showing an interest in their feelings and needs. Remember don't do active listening if you are not genuinely interested in listening to their feelings as it damages the communication further. As the temperature goes down at appropriate points, usually when their response has been reduced to monosyllables, you can send another I-Message or present facts and go back into active listening. When you have uncovered the need, you can then help them find a solution (which we will cover in detail next week). When your child feels heard and accepted, the chances are much greater that they will be able to hear and accept your need for their behaviour to change.

So your Homeplay this week is to identify a behaviour you'd like changed, formulate an I-Message and be prepared to Shift Gears. Remember, not to be too hard on yourself as it does take practice and perseverance to change our own habits..

