

**Don't:**

**Blame the other person:** Blaming makes the problem the other person's fault. If you say, "It's your fault," then the other person usually feels defensive and doesn't focus on solving the problem.

**Defend yourself:** If the other person has stated a problem and you feel responsible or feel you are being blamed, you will feel the need to defend yourself. Let it go, or simply say, "I feel like I need to defend myself."

**Try to solve too many problems at one time:** Stick to the topic at hand. If the issue is leaving dishes in the family room, don't add that dishes are also left all over the house, along with shoes, jackets, and books. Small and specific problems are easier to solve.

**Bring up the past:** The past is often a part of what you don't like now. It's easy to slip into using words such as *always* and *never*. Think of those words as poison when trying to resolve family problems. This is not the time to bring up that Kylie always leaves her clothes lying on the bathroom floor. These reminders put the person in a box of old behavior, and they don't encourage change.

**Change the subject:** Stay on track. It is easier to work toward the solution if you stay focused on one topic. If you get sidetracked into related issues, it leads you away from solving the problem.

**Lecture:** You don't need to give a long explanation or discussion about why you are asking for a change. A simple statement makes it clear. Using a lot of words makes it hard for others to pay attention.

**Put the other person down:** This seems obvious. However, teasing is often a means of humor and closeness in families. It is easy to say something negative about the other under the pretense of teasing.

**Don't try to problem solve if you're angry or upset.**