

## **Two Words That ALWAYS Confuse Communication and NEVER Help Resolve a Conflict**

In an attempt to communicate a feeling, we often use a quantitative statement to communicate a qualitative issue.

- **“You are ALWAYS late!”**
- **“You NEVER help around the house!”**
- **“You are ALWAYS complaining!”**
- **“You NEVER let me do what I want to do.”**

When someone tries to convey his or her dislike or disapproval related to something we have said or done, and the words “always” or “never” are in the description, we only hear those two words and miss the point. Interestingly enough, if someone says, “You are always nice to me,” we immediately get the point even though we know we are not “always” nice. The difference is that the negative use of the words “always” and “never” results in feelings of hurt and defensiveness because we have been “unfairly” criticized. We are then determined to argue that the statement is simply NOT true.

Since I believe we will NEVER stop using quantitative words to validate our qualitative statements, it would be nice if we could ALWAYS be aware how ineffective these words can be in a conflict. It is much more effective to make a clear statement about how we feel.

- **“I get anxious and don’t like it when you are late.”**
- **“I don’t like it when you don’t help around the house and I really like it when you do.”**
- **“I don’t like it when you complain and have no solutions for your complaints.”**
- **“I wish you would help me do more that I want to do.”**

As you can see, these statements do not resolve a conflict, but they do introduce the issues so more discussion can occur related to the concerns in a framework that is not quantitative. They are statements about what you experience and how you feel. Hopefully they are not felt as criticisms that elicit defensiveness, but are experienced as invitations for conversation.