

“I” Statement Handout

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What Are “I” Statements?

“I” statements are a communication tool that helps you express your thoughts, feelings, and needs in a way that avoids blaming or criticizing others. By focusing on your own experiences, you promote understanding and reduce defensiveness in conversations.

Why Use “I” Statements?

- **Reduce Conflict:** They help prevent arguments by focusing on your feelings, rather than accusing someone else.
- **Promote Understanding:** They make it easier for others to understand how you feel and why, which leads to better communication.
- **Foster Healthy Relationships:** They encourage open, honest dialogue and strengthen trust between family members.

How to Structure an “I” Statement:

An “I” statement typically has three parts:

1. **“I feel...”** (State your emotion)
2. **“When you...”** (Describe the specific behavior or situation without blame)
3. **“Because...”** (Explain why the behavior affects you)

Example of an “I” Statement:

- **Instead of saying:** “You never listen to me!”
- **Say:** “I feel frustrated when I’m talking and you’re looking at your phone because it seems like you’re not paying attention.”

Step-by-Step Guide to Using “I” Statements:

1. **Identify Your Feelings:**
 - Before you speak, take a moment to recognize what you are feeling. Are you frustrated, sad, angry, or hurt? Be clear about your emotion.
 - **Example:** “I feel upset...”
2. **Describe the Behavior:**
 - Focus on the specific action or situation that triggered your feelings, without placing blame or making assumptions about the other person’s intentions.
 - **Example:** “...when I see the house isn’t cleaned up after we all agreed to take care of it together...”
3. **Explain Why It Matters:**

- Clarify why the behavior or situation affects you. This part helps the other person understand the impact of their actions.
- **Example:** "...because it makes me feel like my efforts aren't being valued, and I worry that I'm taking on too much."

4. **Optional: Make a Request for Change:**

- If appropriate, follow up with a request for what you need to resolve the issue.
- **Example:** "Could we come up with a plan to make sure we all stick to our responsibilities?"

"I" Statement Formula:

1. **I feel** (emotion) **when** (specific behavior or event) **because** (explain the effect on you).
2. **Example:** "I feel hurt when I'm left out of family decisions because it makes me feel like my opinion doesn't matter."

Practice Using "I" Statements:

Here are some situations for you to practice converting to "I" statements. Try to rephrase each example using the steps above.

1. **Situation:** "You never help me with chores!"
 - **"I" Statement:** _____
2. **Situation:** "You always interrupt me when I'm talking!"
 - **"I" Statement:** _____
3. **Situation:** "You don't spend enough time with me anymore!"
 - **"I" Statement:** _____

Tips for Using "I" Statements Effectively:

- **Stay Calm:** Using "I" statements works best when you're calm and focused on solving the issue, rather than venting frustration.
- **Be Specific:** Avoid generalizations like "always" or "never." Focus on one specific behavior or event.
- **Be Open to Listening:** After sharing your "I" statement, give the other person a chance to respond and share their perspective.
- **Avoid Assumptions:** Stick to your own feelings and experiences rather than assuming you know the other person's intentions.

Examples of “I” Statements in Different Situations:

1. Family Conflict:

- **Instead of:** “You never make time for family activities!”
- **Say:** “I feel sad when we don’t spend time together as a family because I miss being connected with everyone.”

2. Sibling Disagreement:

- **Instead of:** “You’re always taking my stuff without asking!”
- **Say:** “I feel annoyed when my things are used without permission because I want to feel respected.”

3. Parent-Child Communication:

- **Instead of:** “You don’t care about my opinion!”
- **Say:** “I feel unimportant when my ideas aren’t considered because I want to contribute to family decisions.”

Benefits of Using “I” Statements:

- **Improves Relationships:** By expressing your needs respectfully, you can strengthen trust and understanding with family members.
- **Reduces Defensiveness:** “I” statements focus on how you feel rather than blaming others, making it less likely that the other person will feel attacked.
- **Encourages Positive Communication:** They promote respectful, open conversations where everyone’s feelings can be acknowledged.

Challenge:

For the next week, practice using “I” statements when addressing conflicts or concerns within your family. Reflect on how these statements change the way others respond to you and how they help resolve issues.

Remember: Good communication starts with taking responsibility for your own feelings. Using “I” statements helps keep conversations respectful, productive, and focused on solutions.