

“I” Statements

When a person feels that they are being blamed—whether rightly or wrongly—it’s common that they respond with defensiveness. “I” statements are a simple way of speaking that will help you avoid this trap by reducing feelings of blame.

A good “I” statement takes responsibility for one’s own feelings, while tactfully describing a problem. “I feel *emotion word* when *explanation*.”

“I feel...” must be followed with an emotion word, such as “angry”, “hurt”, or “worried”.

Careful wording won’t help if your voice still sounds blaming. Use a soft and even tone. In your explanation, gently describe how the other person’s actions affect you.

Examples

Blaming “You can’t keep coming home so late! It’s so inconsiderate.”

“I” Statement “I feel worried when you come home late. I can’t even sleep.”

Blaming “You never call me. I guess we just won’t talk anymore.”

“I” Statement “I feel hurt when you go so long without calling. I’m afraid you don’t care.”

Practice

Scenario: A friend always cancels plans at the last minute. Recently, you were waiting for them at a restaurant, when they called to say they couldn’t make it.

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Scenario: You are working on a group project, and one member is not completing their portion. You have repeatedly had to finish their work.

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Scenario: Your boss keeps dumping new work on you, with little instruction, and not enough time. Despite working overtime, you’re weeks behind.

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