

"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.

- Ask a question first—default to curiosity.
- Express how you feel about it and give an explanation why you were asking.
 - "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 "Did something happen? If no, the reason why I asked is I didn't receive any communication indicating you'd be late and I feel worried when you come home late."

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.

"I" Statement "Is everything okay? If so, I feel frustrated that plans were canceled at the last minute because I was really looking forward to our time together."

Practice

Managing Across

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

"I" Statement

Managing Up

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

"I" Statement