



Communicating with “I” Statements

The formula for communicating feelings more effectively is as follows:

“I feel _____
(state a feeling such as glad, sad, mad, scared, etc)

when you _____
(describe the other person’s behavior without criticism, judgment or contempt)

because _____
(state your need that relates to the feeling and any thoughts or beliefs related to it)

What I want/need is _____
(describe the exact behavior(s) the other person can do that would meet your need)

Examples:

1. I appreciate when you pick up your things every day because I need to have things organized in order to feel good about our house. Thanks for being so considerate of my need for order, even though that’s not as important to you.
2. I felt scared when you didn’t call me yesterday to let me know that you would be home late because I worried that you weren’t safe. I know you were in an area that wasn’t the safest to walk in at night. What I need to know is how you plan to keep yourself safe there, and to be contacted whenever you are going to get home more than a half hour late. I also felt angry when you didn’t call because I thought you didn’t really care about my feelings and need to know that you are okay. What I need to know is that you realize how important this is to me, and that you will make an effort to contact me, even if it’s not convenient for you at the time.

Some helpful hints about communication:

1. Take time to think it through before you address something with someone else. This will allow you to communicate without the immediate intensity of feelings.
2. Use a sincere tone of voice that truly expresses caring. If you can’t do that immediately, wait until you can.
3. Be concrete and specific when communicating your needs. Do not assume that someone will know what you need or want.
4. Use as many words as possible to describe the intensity of your feelings.
5. Make eye contact, even if that’s hard to do. You will have a better chance of being heard if you do.



How to Use I Statements

To express feelings:

1. Identify how you are feeling and why. Use the PAUSE.
2. Identify intensity of feeling, and ability to communicate.
3. Phrase what you want to say.
4. Meet with person and discuss feelings.

Example: "I feel angry that you didn't pick up your socks like you said you would. What I would like is for you to follow through with what you say you will do."

To clarify information:

1. Assess your ability to understand what the person is saying.
2. Identify what you need.
3. Phrase what you assessed and what you need.
4. Discuss with the person.

Example: "I'm having difficulty understanding what you are saying. I lost you when you started to yell at me about yesterday. Can you help me by slowing down and talking more quietly so I can understand?"

To avoid conflict or arguments:

1. Identify your potential reactions to something someone else is saying.
2. Decide to not fight. If needed, use the Trigger Ping Pong Prevention Plan word or words.
3. Decide to understand what the other person is trying to say.
4. Discuss feelings and needs with other.

Example: "I think we'll have a fight if we keep going because I am starting to feel attacked. To prevent this, can we take a little break?"

or

"I don't understand why you're reacting like you are right now. Do you know why?"

To be assertive:

1. Identify what you need.
2. Figure out how to get what you need.
3. Discuss with others as needed.

Example: "I'm feeling sad right now. Do you have a minute to talk?"