

"I" Statement 101

Discussing sensitive and difficult topics with people that we care about can become confusing with emotions. Sometimes we feel unheard or blamed for doing something we didn't do. The purpose of "I" statements is to communicate your feelings and needs in an assertive manner and reduce blame and accusations toward others. "You" statements may make the listener feel criticized and defensive and less likely to engage thoughtfully with you. You can use "I" statements when you are feeling hurt, sad, anxious, angry, and happy. It is important to practice using positive "I" statements during low stress encounters to prepare for more stressful interactions. "I" statements typically follow a set pattern beginning with saying "I" and how you feel. Then express what occurred that provoked your feelings. Finish with saying what it was about the behavior that hurt your feelings, and say what you would prefer and/or offer a suggestion.

Examples:

Teacher: "I feel angry when you call on me in class and I don't want to be called on. It makes me feel like you are picking on me. I would like for you to only call on me when I raise my hand."

Friend: "I feel sad when you don't play with me at recess because I look forward to playing on the play set. I would like for you to let me know when you don't want to play, instead of ignoring me."

Parent: "I feel worried when you don't say "bye" to me in the morning before you leave for work, because I feel that you are mad at me. I would like for you to always say "bye" to me, even if it wakes me up in the morning."

I feel _____

When _____

Because _____

What I need/want is _____

Think about a recent or upcoming situation with a teacher, friend, or parent where you need to communicate your thoughts and feelings. Use the script to the left to effectively communicate your needs in a positive manner.