

How and When to Use "I" Statements

The essence of Appropriate Assertiveness is being able to state your case without arousing the defences of the other person. The secret of success lies in saying how it is for you rather than what they should or shouldn't do. "The way I see it..." attached to your assertive statement, helps. A skilled "I" statement goes even further.

When you want to say something but don't know what will help, 'I' statement formula is a good step in the right direction. An "I" statement says how it is on my side, how I see it.

You could waste inordinate quantities of brain-power debating how the other person will or won't respond. Don't! You do need to be sure that you haven't used inflaming language, which would be highly likely to cause a negative response i.e. it should be 'clean'. Because you don't know beforehand whether the other person will do what you want or not, the 'cleanest "I" statements are delivered not to force them to fix things, but to state what you need.

Use an "I" statement when you need to let the other person know you are feeling strongly about the issue. Others often underestimate how hurt or angry or put out you are, so it's useful to say exactly what's going on for you - making the situation appear neither better nor worse.

What Your "I" Statement Isn't

Your "I" statement is not about being polite. It's not to do with 'soft' or 'nice', nor should it be rude. **It's about being clear.**

It's a conversation opener, not the resolution. It's the opener to improving rather than deteriorating relationships.

If you expect it to be the answer and to fix what's not working straight away - you may have an unrealistic expectation.

If you expect the other person to respond as you want them to immediately, you may have an unrealistic expectation.

What you can realistically expect is that an appropriate "I" statement made with good intent:

- Is highly unlikely to do any harm
- Is a step in the right direction

- Is sure to change the current situation in some way
- Can/will open up to possibilities you may not yet see

Sometimes the situation may not look any different yet after a clean "I" statement, it often feels different, and that on its own can change things.

Non-defensive Communication

Pointing the finger and using 'you' messages puts blame onto the other person. When we feel someone is blaming us we often become defensive. Once people become defensive or angry, communication usually breaks down.

When to Use:

When we need to confront others about their behaviour

When we feel others are not treating us right

When we feel defensive or angry

When others are angry with us

STEP 1. LISTEN

How to listen

- Firstly - Do not interrupt
- Repeat back to the person what they have just said (try to put it in your own words)
- Use 'ahaa etc.' to reinforce that you are listening
- Make sure your body language shows that you are listening
- Do not give advice (unless asked for)

Example leader sentences:

What I'm hearing is....

Did you say....

So you reckon....

I understand that....

So you say that....

STEP 2. USE "I" AND NOT "YOU"

Example leader sentences:

When I'm....

When I....

I think that I....

I feel that I....

My concern is....

STEP 3. REFER TO THE BEHAVIOUR NOT TO THE PERSON

Example leader sentences:

When I'm shouted at I....

When I'm sworn at I....

When I'm pushed around I....

When the towels are left on the floor I....

When I think I'm not being heard I....

When the toys are left on the floor I....

STEP 4. STATE HOW THE BEHAVIOUR AFFECTS YOU

Ask yourself ... how does this behaviour affect me or make me feel?

Example leader sentences:

I feel unappreciated when....

I'm worried that something will go wrong if....

My concern is that....

I get really anxious when....

I get really scared when....

I feel hurt when....

I feel tired when....

STEP 5 STATE WHAT YOU NEED TO HAPPEN

Example leader sentences:

I need to....

I would like....

What I'd like to see happen is....

It would be nice if....

For children there is a sixth step which includes a consequence. However, it is recommended not to use the sixth step until the second time around. It is also at this time that the type of consequences can be discussed with the child if they are old enough. Other ways of getting children to be responsible for their own behaviour is to use the "When then " statement or a behavioural reward chart.

For example

"**When** the towels are picked up **then** you can go and play."

STEP 6. STATE THAT THERE IS A CONSEQUENCE TO THEIR ACTIONS

If..... then.....

For example:

If the towels continue to be thrown on the floor there will be no watching Simpsons that night.

OVERALL EXAMPLE 1

STEP 1 LISTEN & REPEAT	So you reckon I interrupt all the time?
STEP 2 USE "I" NOT "YOU"	OK ... but when I'm ...
STEP 3 BEHAVIOUR	shouted at ...
STEP 4 AFFECT OF THE	I need to feel as if I've been understood so please don't shout

BEHAVIOUR

at me and I will try not to interrupt.

OVERALL EXAMPLE 2

STEP 1 LISTEN & REPEAT

So you're saying I never see the good things that you do and you feel unappreciated?

STEP 2 USE "I" NOT "YOU"

OK ... but when I'm ...

STEP 3

BEHAVIOUR

sworn at ...

STEP 4 AFFECT OF THE
BEHAVIOUR

I feel put down and hurt ...

STEP 5

NEEDS

I'd like not to be spoken to in that way ...

(For Children)

STEP 6

CONSEQUENCES

and if I continue to hear you swear in this house then ...