“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blaming</th>
<th>“I” Statement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You can’t keep coming home so late! It’s so inconsiderate.”</td>
<td>“I feel worried when you come home late. I can’t even sleep.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You never call me. I guess we just won’t talk anymore.”</td>
<td>“I feel hurt when you go so long without calling. I’m afraid you don’t care.”</td>
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Practice

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<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>You are working on a group project, and one member is not completing their portion. You have repeatedly had to finish their work.</td>
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<td>Your boss keeps dumping new work on you, with little instruction, and not enough time. Despite working overtime, you’re weeks behind.</td>
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