

# FOUR-PART "I" STATEMENTS

'I' statements allow you to clearly state how you, personally, perceive and respond to a situation. You tell the other person how you feel, but you don't blame them for your feeling that way. 'I' statements can be particularly effective way of getting your message across when you are angry, irritated, upset, or are not getting what you want or need.

The four parts of an 'I' Statement are:

**The action: "When..."**

**Your response: "I feel..."**

**Preferred outcome: "I would like..."**

**The benefit: "That way..."**

Saying to someone "I think", "I need", "I want" or "I would like" is more likely to result in a positive outcome than starting with something like "You should" or "You are".

This approach also encourages the other person to tell you how they feel and be clear and specific about their needs.

## 1 THE ACTION

You need to describe the action or situation causing the problem objectively. Give a factual description of what happened.

Begin with something like:

"When messages are not passed on . . ."

"When I hear a raised voice . . ."

"When I'm told we are going out . . ."

Rather than:

"When you don't pass on a message . . ."

"When you rant and rave at me . . ."

"When you don't bother to tell me you've arranged to go out ..."

The last three ways are likely to cause the other person to be defensive. An objective description of the event can help the other person understand the effect their action has on you.

## 2

### **YOUR RESPONSE**

People don't always know the effect that their actions may have on others. When you are talking about your response to their action, rather than their action alone, you're on safer ground. People are less likely to argue the point if you say "I get angry" or "I feel frustrated".

1. Your response might be an emotion. For example, you might explain that you feel hurt, angry or ignored.
2. Telling people what you do can sometimes be easier than saying how you feel. For example, "I withdraw"; "I shout at you"; "I do everything myself".
3. You might tell the other person what you feel like doing, even if you don't do it. For example, "I feel like ignoring you"; "I want to walk out".

Avoid blaming others for how you feel. They may get defensive and reject the accusation with statements like: "If you get angry, that's your problem!"

## 3

### **YOUR PREFERRED OUTCOME**

Discuss what you would like to be able to do or have. This focuses on what would improve the situation for you without blaming the other person.

1. When I am told we're going to a party at the last minute (action).
2. I feel angry (response).
3. I would like to have a day's notice, so that I can plan for the evening (preferred outcome).
4. That way I can arrange a babysitter and be ready on time (the benefit)

## 4

### **THE BENEFIT**

Tell the other person what they will get out of changing their behavior - what's in it for them. They need to feel that they are winning too.

### **IMPOSE CONSEQUENCE**

The fourth thing to communicate is a consequence, if needed. Remember that if you add a consequence, you need to be prepared to carry out the consequence.

Example: Next time you \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_."