

I Statements

I statements are an important communication skill in conflict management. I statements begin with the word “I” and state directly to someone how you feel about something, why you feel that way, and what you want. Often in conflict situations, we use “you” statements, which can escalate the conflict by making the listener feel blamed, judged or criticized and which can cause him/her to withdraw or become angry or defensive. I statements, in contrast, are less threatening and send clearer messages than “you” statements. When we use I statements, it is easier for the other person to hear what we are saying, even when we are angry or frustrated. We are honest about and take responsibility for our own feelings, and we communicate in a way that encourages positive problem-solving.

The format is as follows:

I feel... (state your emotion)

when... (describe the specific situation in a neutral and objective way)

because... (state the effect on your life)

and I want... (state the action you want taken).

It is very important to begin I statements by stating the emotion you have about the situation, rather than a thought or action.

Adapted from materials developed by Community Mediation, Inc., New Haven, Connecticut.