



Using “I” Statements to Communicate Your Truth in Love

Purpose: The purpose of an “I” statement is to state what you need to say in a non-defensive way that owns what you feel, think, need, perceive, or want. They focus on you rather than the other person.

“I” statements are the opposite of “you” statements which state what is wrong with the other person which feels attacking and increases the chance the person will become defensive and argumentative (although they still can).

“I” statements aren’t passive or weak nor are they meant to keep you from being honest. They actually help you state your truth clearly in as non-defensive a way as possible. They can defuse an argument because rather than you arguing, you simply state what is true for you and refuse to defend it or justify it.

Types of “I” Statements:

“When I am _____, I feel _____.”

“I am/am not _____.”

“I feel/need/want/think _____.”

“I” statements can state a boundary: “I will/will not _____.”

“I statements” can include *when*: “I feel _____ when _____.”

“I” statements can include an *if then* clause: “If _____, then I _____.”

Examples of “I” statements Vs. “You” Statements:

“I am uncomfortable with your drinking. I don’t know how much longer I can be around it.”
(“You have a drinking problem.”)

“I don’t like to be yelled at. I will discontinue the conversation when there is yelling.”
(“You’re yelling at me.”)

“I feel belittled when I am criticized in front of our friends.”
(“You belittled me in front of our friends.”)

“I am upset.”
(“You made me upset.”)

“I am getting impatient. If the project isn’t done by Sunday, then I will get outside help.”
(“You are taking too long to get the project done.”)

“I need support with the children.”
 (“You don’t help with the children.”)

“I am not comfortable with that.”
 (“You are behaving badly.”)

“I feel disrespected when decisions are made without my input.”
 (“You don’t care about my opinions on decisions.”)

“I would like to do it, but I just can’t.”
 (“You can’t make me do it.”)

As you can see, “I” statements are powerful statements about YOU, not the other person. You don’t have to defend them or argue about them. You won’t be able to communicate only with “I” statements and there is a time to tell someone what they are doing wrong. They are just one tool you can use to help you communicate your truth in love.