



Crafting “I” Statements to Clearly Communicate Needs

When we feel frustrated or angry, it can be tempting to blame someone else. Placing blame may feel like we’re getting something off our chest in the moment, but it doesn’t help solve the issue. Here are a couple of examples to consider:

Example 1: Parent’s Perspective

“You always leave the kitchen a mess. You don’t care that I’m losing my mind here trying to juggle work and everything else.” -Parent to child

What is the issue that this parent is raising? Yes, the kitchen is a mess, but what specifically does the parent want the child to do about it? They have not communicated this clearly. Using an “I” statement in this situation would be more effective. “I” statements include four parts:

- 1) “I Feel”
- 2) “When”
- 3) “Because”
- 4) “What I need is” (Also expressed as “I really appreciate when you...”)

The statements are specific, focus on facts, and communicate clearly what the speaker feels and needs. For the example above, the “I” statement to resolve the situation might look like this:

“I feel frustrated when I see dirty dishes all over the counters and in the kitchen sink, because I don’t have time to wash them all myself. I really appreciate when you wash your own dishes after each meal.”

This “I” statement gives the parent a more neutral way to express their feelings and needs, clearly communicating to the child what they could do to help (wash their dishes after each meal).

Example 2: Child’s Perspective

“You’re always busy and stressed. When I ask for help with my homework you yell at me to help more around the house. I don’t know how to keep up with school right now without making you mad.”-Child to parent.

The child has shared their general feelings in this statement, but they aren’t asking specifically for what they need from the parent. If they were to put together an “I” statement, it might look like this:

“I feel sad and frustrated when you yell and won’t help me with my homework, because I am trying my best to be a good student. I really appreciate when you talk with me calmly and tell me exactly what I can do to help.”

This “I” statement tells the parent how the child feels, and clearly outlines how the parent might shift their behavior so that the child gets the support they are seeking.