

Communication Toolkit

Using 'I' statements

This worksheet is designed to assist you in developing your communication skills to better manage your relationships.

If you are having trouble understanding this worksheet or need support, please call a MensLine Australia counsellor on 1300 78 99 78.

Things to think about

When you are communicating with someone, and things are already stressed and difficult, one strategy you can use is the 'I' statement. It can sometimes take away the sense of blame or criticism. 'I' statements put responsibility for your feelings back onto you. 'I' statements are useful when you want to express something difficult. However, it is often easier to first try using them when you are not in conflict. It is also important to remember you can also use 'I' statements when expressing positive feelings.

How to make an 'I' statement

1. Say 'I' instead of 'you' or 'they'
2. Say what you are feeling
3. Say what is the event or situation that provoked your feelings
4. Say what it is about the behaviour or its consequences that you object to
5. Say what you would have preferred to happen - an alternative to the behaviour

So then it becomes a sentence:

#1 I feel...#2...when...#3...because...#4...I'd appreciate it if...#5...

For example:

I feel hurt when you criticise me for being late because I think I was late for a good reason.

I'd appreciate it if you first asked me why I was late.

Tips

- Avoid using lines such as 'I feel like you' or 'I feel that you'.
- Don't start with the word 'you', because the 'you' sounds like blaming.
- Start by practising expressing emotions like hurt, anxiety or sadness before you express anger. It's generally harder to express anger through 'I' statements without it coming out as blame and attack.
- Remember to practice using positive 'I' statements.
- Like anything, both parties often get better at this with practice.
- Just be aware it is not about getting the response from the other person that you may want. The aim is to be respectful, regardless.

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Activity

1. By yourself, think about what you want to tell the other person.
2. Write down what you would like to say as an 'I' statement:

I feel

when

because

I'd appreciate it if

3. Practice saying what you want to say on your own, out loud. Say it at least five or more times until it sounds natural.
4. Say it to the person concerned then stop and listen to their response.
5. How did it work? If anything, what would you change for next time?

This worksheet is part of a series on anger management, communication and self-care. You may find it useful to complete other worksheets in this series. For more information or assistance, call MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78