

How and When to Use “I” Statements to Defuse Conflict

Using "I" statements is a helpful tool when you're trying to avoid conflict or resolve it in early stages, but can be used in any stage of conflict resolution. It's a super simple formula used to let the other person know you're feeling a certain way about an issue without making the situation seem better or worse than it is. Others often underestimate how hurt, angry, or frustrated you are, so “I” statements say what's going on for you and start a positive conversation to resolve the issue without putting others on the defensive. Sometimes, after using an “I” statement, the situation may not look any different, but it often feels different, and that on its own can change things.

The “I” Statement Formula:

STATEMENT	PERSONALIZE	EXAMPLE
I feel...	Insert the right feeling word	Upset, frustrated, let down, sad...
When...	Explain the situation and avoid using “you”	Emails are regularly sent without me knowing ...
Because...	State how it affects you	I don't have a chance to add important content...
I'd Like...	Insert what you'd like to happen	The chance to contribute to the email draft...
Would You Consider...	State ideas/solutions to fix the conflict. Be specific. Both people must be ok with the suggestion.	Working together to create an email calendar/ schedule so I can provide info to you ahead of time and the recipients get all they need in one communication...

More About “I” Statements

- While it MAY fix the problem right away, but don't expect it to. It's a conversation opener, not the resolution. It's the starting point to improving relationships.
- Your "I" statement isn't about being “soft” or “nice”, nor is it about being aggressive or rude. It's about being **clear**.
- An appropriate "I" statement made with good intent:
 - Is highly unlikely to do any harm
 - Is a step in the right direction
 - Is sure to change the current situation in some way
 - Can/will open up to possibilities you may not yet see
- When to Use:
 - When we need to confront others about their behavior
 - When we feel others are not treating us the way we want or deserve to be treated
 - When we feel defensive or angry
 - When others are angry with us