



“I” messages

An “I” message is a method of describing your own needs, values and feelings openly, honestly and directly. It does this by emphasizing the first person pronoun, claiming ownership of your feelings, expressing your needs directly and describing the situation instead of evaluating it.

Examples:

“I am really discouraged by the lack of interest committee members seem to have for my proposal.”

“It’s important to me to keep up with this new project. It’s an area I’m not very familiar with, and I need to stay on top of things.”



“You” messages

A “You” message emphasizes the second person pronoun and blames or accuses the other for your feelings, or judges others’ behavior. Its effect on another is to cause the other to become defensive. Instead of opening up conversation, it makes the other wary of your intentions and causes him or her to either withdraw from the conversation, or attempt to justify his/her own feelings.

Examples:

“You’re so unreliable and incompetent.”

“You make me so angry! You made me late and I missed half the presentation!
It’s all your fault.”



Confrontive assertions

The confrontive assertion formula elements:

- 1) **When you...** (behavioral description)
- 2) **I feel...** (feeling word)
- 3) **Because...** (effect it has on my life)

Confrontive assertions tend to place blame on people. They can be accusatory, and at their worst, demean the character of the person you're speaking to. This is counter-productive to interest-based problem solving because it entrenches positions by focusing on the individual.

Examples:

“When you are absent from committee meetings I feel strongly that staff effectiveness is reduced because we don't have the benefit of your experience and knowledge in plant site relocations.”

“I felt really angry when you didn't show up. I got there late and felt panicky when I found I had missed half the presentation. I need to know you will be able to give me a ride when you say you will, or else I will make other arrangements.”



Productive assertions

Once you understand the formula elements, other words and phrases may be substituted to create productive assertions--statements that show you are concerned with how one person's actions affect others. Productive assertions move people toward mutual interests and away from individual positions.

Examples:

"I am really excited about this proposal and I believe it will benefit us all. But I am puzzled by your position, and I'm beginning to feel pressured about reaching a quick agreement."

"I really become concerned when you "come on hard" with the other commission members during our meetings. Some of the members tend to withdraw when it happens and then we can't draw on their expertise."

"I get anxious when I see that your committee expenses are about to exceed our budget and I'm puzzled when I don't see any corrective action being taken."