

### *I-Statements vs. You-Statements (Intervention)*

An I-statement is a way to express our feelings about a situation using the template “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion) when \_\_\_\_\_ (situation),” or “When \_\_\_\_\_ (situation) happened, I felt \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion).” However, this rather simple concept can easily become ineffective when we use a roadblock. Roadblocks include Assumptions Instead of Experience, Pointed Language, and Thoughts for Feelings. Here, we will practice how to transform ineffective I-statements to effective I-statements.

**Example:** “I feel like I am the only one who cleans the house.”

Think about how you might feel if your partner told you this. Probably hurt and defensive. Most people would immediately begin thinking of a defense to give for this statement, providing all the times that you’ve cleaned recently or the times that your partner hasn’t. When we switch from listening to forming a defense for a blaming statement, we totally miss the point of the original I-statement - that our partner is hurting. We make it about us instead of about our partner.

**New I-Statement:** “I feel hurt and disappointed when I don’t get help cleaning the house.”

Roadblocks are things we say that prevent us from communicating our feelings effectively.

- *Assumptions Instead of Experience*

**Example:** “I feel like you don’t care about helping the kids get ready in the morning.”

- The statement focuses on what we’re assuming (intention, other’s feelings, others’ thought process, roles in situations) about the situation, rather than what made us feel it.

**New I-Statement:** “I feel frustrated and stressed when I have to get the kids ready for school on my own.”

- *Pointed Language*

**Example:** “I feel angry that you were too lazy to take the trash out.”

- Using “you,” “he/she/they,” names, or “*someone*” can point a blaming finger, which reduces the chance of your partner listening to the I-statement.

**New I-Statement:** “I feel angry that the trash didn’t make it to the dumpster.”

- *Thoughts for Feelings*

**Example:** “I feel like you don’t listen to what I have to say and I have to say things over and over again.”

- Using “I feel,” but describing a thought instead of an emotion word. “I feel like you...” is not an emotion statement. What emotions (use the [Feelings Wheel](#)) have arisen from the situation?

**New I-Statement:** “I feel ignored when I have to repeat myself.”

**Practice:**

“I feel like you don’t listen.”

- Think of a time when you had to say that. What emotions came up? How might you rephrase this to share your own experience without using the roadblocks?

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“I feel like you never do the dishes and I always end up doing them. I work too hard to come home and have to do the dishes, too.”

- This I-statement is a little longer and has a lot of underlying feelings in it. How might you transform the sentences to talk about the situation and how it affected you?
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“I feel like you don’t care when I get a haircut. You never say anything about it.”

- Think about how you feel when you change your appearance or wear a new outfit. Imagine your partner made no comment about it. How might you express your feelings in a way that your partner will be more likely to hear it?
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