

COMMUNICATION: “I” STATEMENTS

AUTHOR(S):	Foundation for Jewish Camp & Westchester Jewish Community Services (Some information from Crisis Prevention Institute & National Council of Behavioral Health.)
SUMMARY:	Participants will explore the impact of “I” Statements and practice creating and using them.
TOPIC(S):	Communication Skills, Leadership Development, Mental Health, Conflict Resolution
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will explore the impact of “I” Statements and practice creating and using them.
AUDIENCE:	8-30 staff
SPACE:	Private area with large enough space for role plays
TIMING:	15 - 20 minutes
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Optional: Youth Mental Health First Aid manual book Optional: Copies of “I” Statement sample worksheet Pens

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- Review Do’s & Don’ts of “I Statements” in the Youth Mental Health First Aid Manual
- Choose a handful of the following statements to read aloud to staff.

1. You never listen to me.	7. You don’t like me.
2. You make me angry.	8. You hate me.
3. Why do you always yell at me?	9. You always say mean things to me.
4. Why can’t you pay attention?	10. You don’t do anything right.
5. You are mean.	11. Why do you make things so hard for me?
6. You never pick me first.	12. Why do you even bother?
- Ask the group to imagine themselves as a camper hearing these from a counselor and share their reactions.
- Discuss:
 - After hearing these, how would you *respond* using an “I” statement?
 - Would it change if they were said to you by a friend or family member?
- Looking at these statements, have staff generate a list of some good examples of “I” Statements. If a large group, consider printing the page and having small groups create them for a few each and share back to the group.
 - Discuss: How do they feel hearing these same statements in “I” statement format?
 - If possible, ask if anyone has a real-life/camp example they’d like to share or possibly get advice on/workshop together.
 - See the “I” Statement diagram on the following page from GoodTherapy.org as a possible resource.



DISCUSS

- When else might "I" Statements be applicable to your life at camp, or outside of camp? Examples: co-workers, to a supervisor, to a supervisee, family member, professor evaluation

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Article for discussion: <https://compassioncoach.com/blog/when-use-i-statements>
- Worksheet on "I" Statements. Consider creating some of your own: <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/i-statements.pdf>

"I" Statements

When a person feels that they are being blamed—whether rightly or wrongly—it's common that they respond with defensiveness. "I" statements are a simple way of speaking that will help you avoid this trap by reducing feelings of blame. A good "I" statement takes responsibility for one's own feelings, while tactfully describing a problem.

"I feel *emotion word* when *explanation*."

- ✓ "I feel..." must be followed with an emotion word, such as "angry", "hurt", or "worried".
- ✓ Careful wording won't help if your voice still sounds blaming. Use a soft and even tone.
- ✓ In your explanation, gently describe how the other person's actions affect you.

Examples

Blaming	"You can't keep coming home so late! It's so inconsiderate."
"I" Statement	"I feel worried when you come home late. I can't even sleep."

Blaming	"You never call me. I guess we just won't talk anymore."
"I" Statement	"I feel hurt when you go so long without calling. I'm afraid you don't care."

Practice

Scenario	A friend always cancels plans at the last minute. Recently, you were waiting for them at a restaurant, when they called to say they couldn't make it.
"I" Statement	