
Handout 8: Using “I” Messages

Introduction

When _____ (describe what happened),
I feel _____ (describe your feeling).
I want _____ (describe what you would like to happen).

Example of an “I” Message: “When my son tells me other kids are picking on him, I feel worried about his safety and happiness here. I want to meet with you to discuss ways to keep him safe.

Example of a “You” Message (what not to say): You’re letting the other kids pick on my son.
Example of a “You” Message Disguised as an “I” Message” (what not to say): I feel that you’re letting the other kids pick up my son.

Responses to “I” Messages: If the other person responds positively to your statement on what you would like to happen, say, “Thank you”. If the other person resists your “I” Message through blame, attack, or excuses, try not to let it sidetrack you. Use reflective listening and feedback, and then give your “I” Message again. You may need to use several rounds of listening, feedback, and “I” Messages.

Instructions: The following statements are being made by a staff person to a parent. Turn these “you” messages into “I” messages. Some of these statements are “you” messages disguised as “I” messages.

1. You must be having problems with Antonio adjusting to the new baby. He’s putting up such a fuss when you leave him here.
2. You didn’t enjoy the Open House, did you? You left so quickly.
3. You didn’t bother to show up for our conference yesterday.

Handout 8: Using “I” Messages (continued)

4. Don't you care that your son is missing breakfast?

5. I think you don't like the way I'm teaching.

6. I wonder why you've been avoiding me because you haven't returned my phone calls.

7. You must feel awful about not getting that job.

8. You're not reading stories to your daughter like you said you would.

9. You forgot to fill out the permission slip again, and now Julie didn't get to go on the field trip.

10. You didn't remember to bring cupcakes for the twins' birthday.