

# I STATEMENTS

I STATEMENTS are very useful when you want to let someone know how you feel in a given situation. They are a way for you to tell the other person what you are thinking, how you are feeling, and what you need, without getting into an argument. They usually begin with the words “I feel...” , followed by a word that names an emotional state. The beauty of these feeling/need statements are that they express your personal experience, and therefore cannot be refuted. Using I Statements allows you to deliver your message without temper ruining your message.

## Advantages

- Lets the other person know what you feel and what you need
- You take ownership of your feelings rather than blaming others
- Avoids arguments and reduces misunderstandings
- Allows you to calmly say how you feel about a situation
- Results in better cooperation from others. When we state our needs, we have a better chance of getting them met.

## How to Use:

1. Explain how YOU feel about the situation/behaviour. (e.g., “I worry that you’ll hurt yourself when you climb up on the fridge.)
2. State what you need. (e.g., I need to know you are safe in the house, not in danger.)

## EXAMPLES

1. I feel grouchy when I’m in a hurry, and I need things to run smoothly and without interruption so we can get home on time.
2. I feel frustrated when I have to repeat myself so many times. It sounds like I’m nagging. I need to know that I’ve been heard and understood.

## Practice Exercises

Read the following four situations, and create an I Statement for each.

1. You gave Rob permission to go to a friend’s house after school when he agreed to do his chores after supper. You remind him at 8:00 PM, but Rob says he’s too tired from doing homework to do the jobs and tells you rudely to leave him alone, that he’ll do them later sometime. (Tip: put your trigger aside and use Active Listening in this scenario)

FIRST: Identify how Rob feels or what he may be thinking so you can reflect that back to him using Active Listening.

SECOND: Identify how you feel: (angry, frustrated, worried, helpless, sad, etc.)

THIRD: Identify what you need: (respect, trust, help, accountability, etc.)

I can see that you are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. However, I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. I need \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Jeremy, age 6 years and his sister Ellen age 8 years fight daily over who gets to watch his/her TV program. The arguments often lead to shouting, crying, calling each other names and hitting one another.

FIRST: Identify how the kids feel or think so you can reflect that back to them using Active Listening.

SECOND: Identify how you feel: (angry, frustrated, worried, helpless, sad, etc.)

THIRD: Identify what you need: (peace, cooperation, harmony, etc.)

Using all the steps, what would you say to the kids?

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3. Khalil's jobs are to put the kitchen dishes away, tidy his room, and take out the garbage. Lately he has been forgetting to take out the trash, even after you have reminded him several times.

FIRST: Be curious about how Khalil feels/thinks so you can reflect that back to them using Active Listening.

SECOND: Identify how you feel: (angry, frustrated, worried, helpless, sad, etc.)

THIRD: Identify what you need: (cooperation, a sense that everyone contributes, etc.)

Using all the steps, what would you say to the Khalil?

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4. Your daughter, Kate, got into your makeup and jewelry without permission to play dress-up with her friend. You had mentioned before that she was not to go into your bedroom and play with your things.

\*Note: this should be a private conversation, not one that takes place in front of the friend. Why?

FIRST: Be curious about how Kate feels or what she was thinking so you can reflect that back to her using Active Listening.

SECOND: Identify how you feel: (angry, frustrated, worried, helpless, sad, etc.)

THIRD: Identify what you need: (respect for your rules, trust, etc.)

Using all the steps, what would you say to the Kate?

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5. AND, on a positive note, I Statements can also be used for positive reinforcement, FREQUENTLY!

Your son, Elton, is disciplined when practicing piano. You notice that he is taking his lessons seriously and practicing every day before it's time for school. You also notice the progress he is making from day to day.

FIRST: Use active listening to infer how Elton might feel about music, his practicing, or what he might think is important about practicing.

SECOND: Use and I STATEMENT to tell him how you feel.

THIRD: Identify how feeling this way affects you and how it might address a need that you, Elton, or the family has. (This is a good way of identifying when kids are doing something that aligns with family values. E.g., the importance of education, the importance of the arts, creativity, persistence, etc.).

LOOK FOR CHANCES TO USE THIS WAY OF TALKING WITH EITHER YOUR CHILDREN OR ADULTS WHEN VARIOUS SITUATIONS ARISE. IT WON'T ALWAYS IMPROVE THE BEHAVIOUR, BUT THEY WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO LISTEN TO YOU AND TRY TO IMPROVE THAN NOT.