“I” STATEMENTS

“I” statements/messages are designed to focus the speaker’s words, feelings and beliefs on themselves as opposed to the other person. Focusing on your feelings tends to refocus the conversation about your experience instead of arguing about the other person’s behavior. Consider these examples:

“You're really scary when you raise your voice” vs “I feel really afraid when voices become elevated.”

While the first statement may be accurate, it creates an opportunity for the listener to argue that they aren’t scary or that you are overreacting. In contrast, “I feel really afraid when voices become elevated” requires the listener to acknowledge the IMPACT of their behavior and not their INTENT.

In some practical ways, “I” statements are similar to using verbal judo. Meaning, saying to your partner, “I feel fearful and worried when I don’t know you’re going to be home late” as opposed to, “You’re so inconsiderate when you don’t call when you’re going to be late. It’s like my fears and worries don’t matter.” I statements allow you to share feelings and the impact without directly accusing the other person which made lead to defensiveness.

Simply starting a sentence with “I” does not make it an I statement.

- “I feel like you’re acting like a jerk.”
- “I hate it when you do not listen to me.”
- “I think you’re being difficult on purpose.”

EXAMPLES OF “I” STATEMENTS

When it comes to “I” statements, practice does make perfect as these are typically not a normal part of our communication pattern. Below are some examples:

“I feel very unsafe when I hear aggressive words or phrases because they scare me.”
“I am upset because I feel that my personal boundaries were not respected which makes it hard for me to trust.”
“I feel frustrated and annoyed when I am told what I should think or feel.”

- “I” statements tell how I feel, what I want, or how I think.
- When you use an “I” Message, you are talking about yourself, NOT THEM!
- They communicate a deeper sense of awareness and accountability for what you are experiencing.
- Keeps you from attacking the other person.
- Communicates feelings without blaming…I feel like…

MORE EXAMPLES:

- “I feel disrespected when…”
- “I can’t help but feel disregarded when…”
- “I want to feel like my feelings are considered, appreciate and valued.”
- “I appreciate and like it when I feel heard and validated.”

“FALSE” I MESSAGES:

- “I feel you need to stop being disrespectful.”
- “I like you’re a jerk for not caring about my feelings.”
- “I feel like you’re a jerk for not listening to me.”