

*Five ways to say "I"*

An "I" message can include any or all of the following five parts. The more you include, the more effective your message.

1. **Observation.** Describe the facts – the indisputable, observable realities. Talk about what you – or any one else – can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. Avoid judgements, interpretations, or opinions. Instead of saying, "you're a slob," say, "Last night's lasagne pan was still on the stove this morning."
2. **Feelings.** Describe your own feelings. It is easier to listen to "I feel frustrated" than "You never help me." Talking about how you feel about another's actions can be valuable feedback for that person.
3. **Thoughts.** Communicate your thoughts, and use caution. Beginning your statement with an "I" doesn't qualify it as an "I" message. "I think you are a slob" is a "You" judgement in disguise. Instead, say, "I'd have more time to study if I didn't have to clean up so often."
4. **Wants.** You are far more likely to get what you want if you say what you want. If someone doesn't know what you want, he doesn't have a choice about helping you get it. Ask clearly. Avoid demanding or using the word *need*. Most people like to feel helpful, not obligated. Instead of "Do the dishes when it's your turn, or else!" say, "I want to divide the housework fairly."
5. **Intentions.** The last part of an "I" message is a statement about what you intend to do. Have a plan that doesn't depend on the other person. For example, instead of "From now on we're going to split the dishwashing evenly," you could say, "I intend to do my share of the housework and leave the rest undone."