

Using “I” Statements

Practicing open, honest communication is sometimes trickier than it seems. This can be especially true when we are dealing with conflict, and feeling blamed or guilty.

In these instances, we may say hurtful things or things that we don’t mean while attempting to express our needs or emotions.

Using “I” Statements can be a straightforward way to communicate how you feel, while simultaneously owning your feelings and outlining the details of the problem as you perceive it.

Worksheet

This worksheet contains a simple formula for using “I” Statements, as well as some helpful examples to get you started.

Fill in the blanks to practice crafting your own “I” Statements.

“I” feel _____ [emotion] _____ when _____
[situation/context/challenge] _____”

For example:

Situation	<i>“You always make me late because you never tell me our plans in advance”</i>
“I” Statement	<i>“I feel stressed out when you don’t update me about our plans.”</i>
Situation	<i>“You always talk about your amazing weekend when you know I have no days off.”</i>
“I” Statement	<i>“I feel left out when I can’t join in your weekend plans.”</i>

Fill In The Blanks

Situation	<i>A relative asks to borrow money for the third time this week. You’re saving for bills and tight on cash.</i>
“I” Statement	
Situation	<i>Your neighbor parks across your driveway every day. You have to park in the street and carry heavy groceries up a long driveway.</i>
“I” Statement	
Situation	<i>A friend cannot make it to your upcoming performance. You’ve been practicing a special song for them for weeks.</i>
“I” Statement	

Appendix C: Feelings Versus Evaluations

Masquerading as Feelings

Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
abandoned	terrified, hurt, bewildered, sad, frightened, lonely	nurturing, connection, belonging, support, caring
abused	angry, frustrated, frightened	caring, nurturing, support, emotional or physical well-being, consideration, for all living things to flourish
(not) accepted	upset, scared, lonely	inclusion, connection, community, belonging, contribution, peer respect
attacked	scared, angry	safety
belittled	angry, frustrated, tense, distressed	respect, autonomy, to be seen, acknowledgment, appreciation
betrayed	angry, hurt, disappointed, enraged	trust, dependability, honesty, honor, commitment, clarity
blamed	angry, scared, confused, antagonistic, hostile, bewildered, hurt	accountability, causality, fairness, justice
bullied	angry, scared, pressured	autonomy, choice, safety, consideration
caged/boxed in	angry, thwarted, scared, anxious	autonomy, choice, freedom
cheated	resentful, hurt, angry	honesty, fairness, justice, trust, reliability
coerced	angry, frustrated, frightened, thwarted, scared	choice, autonomy, freedom (to act freely, to choose freely)

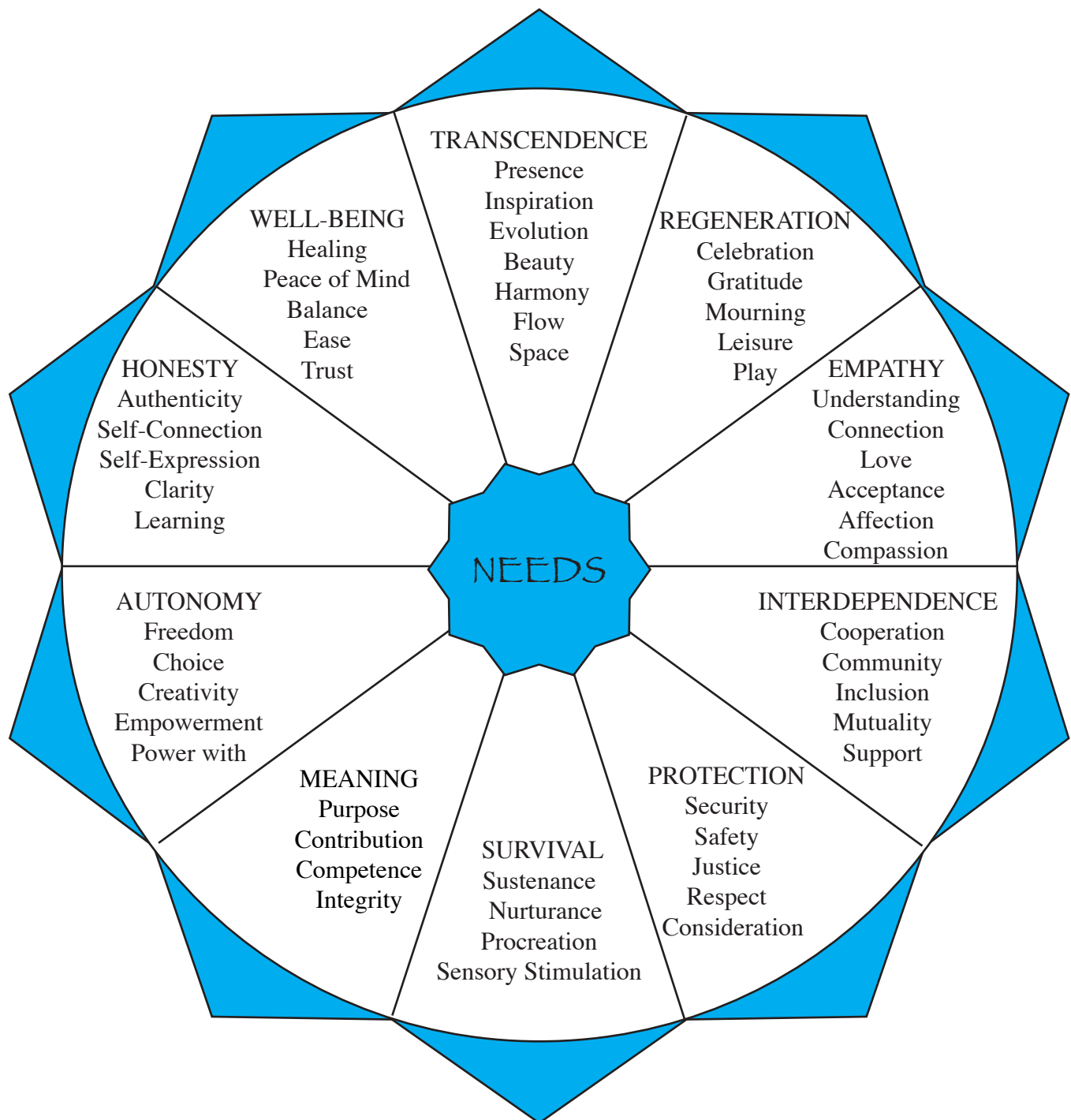
Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
cornered	angry, scared, anxious, thwarted	autonomy, freedom
criticized	in pain, scared, anxious, frustrated, humiliated, angry, embarrassed	understanding, acknowledgment, recognition, accountability, nonjudgmental communication
discounted/ diminished	hurt, angry, embarrassed, frustrated	acknowledgment, inclusion, recognition, respect, to matter
disliked	sad, lonely, hurt	connection, appreciation, understanding, acknowledgment, friendship, inclusion
distrusted	sad, frustrated	trust, honesty
dumped on	angry, overwhelmed	respect, consideration
harassed	angry, frustrated, pressured, frightened	respect, space, consideration, peace
hassled	irritated, distressed, angry, frustrated	serenity, autonomy, to do things at my own pace and in my own way, calm, space
ignored	lonely, scared, hurt, sad, embarrassed	connection, belonging, inclusion, community, participation
insulted	angry, embarrassed	respect, consideration, acknowledgment, recognition
interrupted	angry, frustrated, resentful, hurt	respect, to be heard, consideration
intimidated	scared, anxious	safety, equality, empowerment

Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
invalidated	angry, hurt, resentful	appreciation, respect, acknowledgment, recognition
invisible	sad, angry, lonely, scared	to be seen and heard, inclusion, belonging, community
isolated	lonely, afraid, scared	community, inclusion, belonging, contribution
left out	sad, lonely, anxious	inclusion, belonging, community, connection
let down	sad, disappointed, frightened	consistency, trust, dependability, consistency
manipulated	angry, scared, powerless, thwarted, frustrated	autonomy, empowerment, trust, equality, freedom, free choice, connection, genuineness
mistrusted	sad, angry	trust
misunderstood	upset, angry, frustrated	to be heard, understanding, clarity
neglected	lonely, scared	connection, inclusion, participation, community, care, to matter, consideration
overpowered	angry, impotent, helpless, confused	equality, justice, autonomy, freedom
overworked	angry, tired, frustrated	respect, consideration, rest, caring
patronized	angry, frustrated, resentful	recognition, equality, respect, mutuality
pressured	anxious, resentful, overwhelmed	relaxation, clarity, space, consideration

Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
provoked	angry, frustrated, hostile, antagonistic, resentful	respect, consideration
put down	angry, sad, embarrassed	respect, acknowledgment, understanding
rejected	hurt, scared, angry, defiant	belonging, inclusion, closeness, to be seen, acknowledgment, connection
ripped off/ screwed	anger, resentment, disappointed	consideration, justice, fairness, acknowledgment, trust
smothered/ suffocated	frustrated, fear, desperation	space, freedom, autonomy, authenticity, self-expression
taken for granted	sad, angry, hurt, disappointed	appreciation, acknowledgment, recognition, consideration
threatened	scared, frightened, alarmed, agitated, defiant	safety, autonomy
trampled	angry, frustrated, overwhelmed	empowerment, connection, community, to be seen, consideration, equality, respect, acknowledgment
tricked	embarrassed, angry, resentful	integrity, trust, honesty
unappreciated	sad, angry, hurt, frustrated	appreciation, respect, acknowledgment, consideration
unheard	sad, hostile, frustrated	understanding, consideration, empathy

Evaluative Word	Feeling(s)	Need(s)
unloved	sad, bewildered, frustrated	love, appreciation, empathy, connection, community
unseen	sad, anxious, frustrated	acknowledgment, appreciation, to be seen and heard
unsupported	sad, hurt, resentful	support, understanding
unwanted	sad, anxious, frustrated	belonging, inclusion, caring
used	sad, angry, resentful	autonomy, equality, consideration, mutuality
victimized	frightened, helpless	empowerment, mutuality, safety, justice
violated	sad, agitated, anxious	privacy, safety, trust, space, respect
wronged	angry, hurt, resentful, irritated	respect, justice, trust, safety, fairness

*This list was developed in the April 2000 Wisconsin International Intensive, edited by Susan Skye.



Needs: Resources required to sustain and enrich life.
 Needs are universal.
 Needs make no reference to any specific person
 doing any specific thing.

Key Distinction: Need vs. Strategy

Bargaining in the Shadow of the Heart

Stephen H. Sulmeyer, J.D., Ph.D.
IACP Seminar
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The Awareness Wheel

A step-by-step guide to talking about what you're really talking about

O

Observation (“What I’m observing is”)

I

Interpretation (“I’m interpreting that to mean”)

F

Feeling (“How I feel about that is”)

W

Want or Need (“What I want/need is”)

A

Action (“And therefore the action I’m willing to take is . . .”)

R

Request (“And what I request that you do is”)

Examples of Emotional Outcroppings

- Self-protective body language
- Change in tone or volume of voice
- Change in facial expression
- Looking away
- Staring/glaring
- Tightening up
- Shutting down
- Tearing up
- Not displaying emotion when it would be appropriate to do so (the “dog that didn’t bark”)
- Interrupting
- Abruptly changing the subject
- Giggling when topic is not funny
- Voice speeds up
- Sitting on hands
- Rocking

Feeling Words

<u>Sad</u>	<u>Glad</u>	<u>Mad</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Scared</u>
Depressed	Contented	Angry	Hopeless	Frightened
Gloomy	Happy	Furious	Distraught	Panicky
Melancholy	Fulfilled	Enraged	Despairing	Terrified
Mournful	Joyful	Wrathful	Lost	Afraid
Grieving	Ecstatic	Hateful	Alienated	Fearful
Desolate	Elated	Pissed off	Worthless	Dread
Unhappy	Euphoric	Ticked off	Unlovable	Nervous
Distressed	Positive	Miffed	Defective	Anxious
Dismal	Serene	Irritated	Deficient	Timid
Glum	Exhilarated	Annoyed	Inadequate	Jittery
Dejected	Thrilled	Upset	Powerless	Apprehensive
Bleak	Fine	Vexed	Broken	Vulnerable
Empty	Pleasant	Spiteful	Overwhelmed	Hesitant
Grim	Gratified	Vengeful	Ashamed	Shaky
Blue	Terrific	Irked	Guilt-ridden	Frozen
Weepy	Satisfied	Cross	Impotent	Petrified
Tearful	Delighted	Perturbed	Isolated	Paralyzed
Upset	Jovial	Scornful	Confused	Jumpy
Barren	Affable	Exasperated	Troubled	Mistrustful
Sorrowful	Elevated	Hostile	Hurt	Defended
Lonely	Pleased	Aggravated	Wounded	Uncertain
Discouraged	Cheerful	Agitated	Insignificant	Alarmed
Devastated	Excited	Indignant	Emasculated	Embarrassed
In the doldrums	Glowing	Galled	Weak	Threatened
Demoralized	High	Seething	Forsaken	Uncomfortable
Miserable	Marvelous	Bitter	Mortified	Worried

Needs

Privacy	Connection	Purpose	Space	Attention
Autonomy	Competence	Accountability	Community	Reassurance
To be heard	Equality	Agency	Partnership	Fun
Contribution	Confidence	Clarity	Recognition	Freedom
Communication	Fulfillment	To be seen	Hope	Meaning
Support	Understanding	To mourn	Celebration	Courage
To matter	Inclusion	Justice	Opportunity	Safety
Acceptance	Consideration	Empathy	Self-worth	Belonging
Happiness	Consistency	Care	Love	Fairness
Mutuality	Friendship	Collaboration	Authenticity	Health
Peace	Serenity	Ease	Relaxation	Reliability
Rest	Empowerment	Transparency	Appreciation	Honesty
Learning	Commitment	Strength	Potency	Acknowledgment
Trust	Respect	Dignity	Companionship	Vulnerability
Equanimity	Significance	Gratitude	Delight	Self-esteem
Enthusiasm	Gratification	Patience	Survival	Nurturance
Connectedness	Joy	Beauty	Awe	Nature
Knowing	Satisfaction	Fulfillment	Self-actualization	Self-transcendence
Mirroring	Support	Sustenance	Creativity	Cooperation
Affection	Kindness	Growth	Learning	Integrity
Spontaneity	Inspiration	Security	Play	Wholeness
Harmony	Community	Order	Efficiency	Compassion

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(Developed by psychologists Sherod Miller, Phyllis Miller,
Elam W. Nunnally, and Stephen Sulmeyer)

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Structured Communication

One important tool that can open up the discussion and keep it from unraveling is *structured communication*.

- Both parties agree that they will take turns, alternating speaking and listening.
- One person goes first, and makes a single point. The other listens.
- After the speaker has finished, the listener repeats back what they've heard to the other's satisfaction.
- After the listener repeats back their understanding of what the speaker said, they ask, "did I get that right? Did I leave anything out?"
- Only after the speaker indicates that they feel completely and accurately heard, they switch roles, and the listener becomes the speaker.
- Repeat, and go back and forth until both sides feel heard and complete.

When the parties know they'll have to repeat back what they've heard to the other's satisfaction, they inevitably listen much more carefully, and with less reactivity. The usual urge to interrupt, rebut the other's point or press their own position tends to disappear. As a result, both parties often feel like they've been able to say what they needed to say, and that what they've said has been heard. Equally important, structured communication exposes both parties to the other's actual perspectives, interests, needs and motivations. When those internal realities are spoken clearly and heard carefully, the mind no longer has to fill in the gaps with assumptions and projections. The false story about the other person begins to collapse under the weight of new and better data.