



I-Messages for Kids

I-Messages are respectful, and truthfully state your thoughts and feelings in a tactful way. They avoid blaming others and only state feelings and ask for a change, without demanding it.

The I-Message formula:

I feel (or felt) _____ (name an emotion)

when you _____ (describe a behavior).

I would like (or I am asking you to) _____ (request a change.)

At times, if the behavior is very upsetting, you might want to add a limit or consequence.

If it happens again, I will _____ (set limits and have a consequence).

The following example was given as a suggestion to a 10-year-old client who was bullied in school occasionally. He found that telling them to "STOP" made things worse. Once he used this statement, there were no longer problems and he was no longer fearful of going to school. With his I-Messages to them, he bully-proofed his life!

I-Statement response: *"I feel upset when you call me names. I am asking you to stop.*

If this happens again, I will tell the teacher."

Now it's your turn:

Can you think of a situation where you can use an I-Statement instead of keeping quiet or using a You-Statement?

I feel (or felt) _____, (name an emotion)

when you _____. (describe a behavior)

I would like (or I am asking you to) _____. (request a change)

At times, if the behavior is very upsetting, you might want to add a limit or consequence.

If it happens again, I will _____.