

SELF EMPOWERMENT WITH “I” MESSAGES

Dr. Jane Bolton, PsyD, LMFT
Psychotherapy and Master Results Life Coaching

You can make a huge difference in your self-esteem as you learn to use assertive “I” messages instead of hurtful “you” messages. It may be hard to re-train yourself to speak in self empowering “I” messages instead of negative “you” messages, but the effort is ever-so worth it. This article explains how to do it.

Explanation: “You” messages are often heard as blaming, hurtful communications that tend to put people on the defensive, and make them want to attack or withdraw. “I” messages are more easily heard by others. This increases the chance that we can work with others to get what we need.

Examples of “You” Messages:

“Turn the TV down. You’re so inconsiderate.”
“You just wear me out. Now you’ve really made me mad.”
“You better call the doctor right now.”

Example of an “I” Message. Using the example above, “You better call the doctor right now” we can see that an “I” message would be easier to hear and more likely to result in the hearer taking the desired action: “**When I see** you having trouble breathing **I feel so scared** because **I think** you may not call the doctor and **you may die and leave me.**”

HOW TO CONSTRUCT AN “I” MESSAGE

Write out a sentence using the 4 steps below. As you become more familiar with the process, you can just think it out before speaking.

The Structure Of An “I” Message:	
Steps	Example
1. Limit the area of behavior that concerns you (instead of globalizing)	By starting with “ When ”...
2. Describe the behavior that is troubling you – specifically, without blaming or sounding judgmental.	I see you having trouble breathing...
3. State you feelings about the possible consequences of the behavior	I feel so scared ...
4. State the consequences of the behavior	I think you may not call the doctor and you may die and leave me. ”

HOW TO DECODE A “YOU” MESSAGE

What a difference it would have made in your self esteem if your parents used this principle. What if you had heard “I don’t want to hurt you” instead of “You’re too sensitive.” But it’s not too late. You can translate hurtful “you” messages back to “I” messages.

1. Start with writing something painful that your parents or another has said to you about you.

2. Remember how you felt when you heard it? How did it affect your self esteem?

3. What did you want to do when you heard it?

4. Now translate the parent's or other's message into an "I" message

5. How do you feel when think of the "I" message?

6. What do you feel like doing when you think of it?

As you can see, the end result of consciously speaking with assertive "I" messages about your own feelings, thoughts, and desires is much more effective than talking about the other person. More self empowerment to you!

Dr. Jane Bolton, a marriage and family therapist, master results coach and contemporary psychoanalyst is dedicated to supporting people in the fullest self expression of their Authentic Selves. This includes Discovery, Understanding, Acceptance, Expression, and Self Esteem. Call 310.838.6363 or visit www.Dr-Jane-Bolton.com .