

CHAPTER 5

Using “I” Language

INTRODUCTION

FOR PEOPLE who love and care for each other, "I" language is a most effective way of communicating because when it is being used it is impossible to argue. Three of the most common mistakes that lead to arguing are:

- Statements about the way another person feels.
- Questions that mask intentions and for which there is no comfortable answer.
- Questions that ask for justification of feelings or behavior.

Any of the above statements or questions can lead to defensiveness and the urge to retaliate — prime ingredients for an argument. "I" language can prevent arguments because it discourages the use of the above types of statements and questions. When you and your partner both use "I" language:

You will be able to talk about your own feelings, desires, and perceptions. You will be accepted as the world's authority on yourself; therefore, your feelings and perceptions about yourself will not be argued. You will be able to state your feelings, desires, concerns, intentions, and opinions openly rather than hiding them behind questions.

Feelings will be accepted as fact and you won't be asked to justify the way you feel.

No doubt you're wondering how "I" language can accomplish what we say it can. One way is by changing the way you use language to express yourself. That's what you'll be learning in this chapter. But "I" language is more than a language or a way of expressing yourself.

It is an attitude as well and without the attitude, it is less likely that just using the language will help you communicate more effectively. In other words, it's the attitude coupled with the language that makes "I" language most effective. Following is an explanation of the four principles that describe the attitude we're talking about.

0. Say what is true for you. In other words, be honest about your feelings. Sometimes you won't know how you feel, but say what you do know and be truthful. Obviously, communication can't be very effective when you don't represent your feelings accurately.
1. Believe what you hear. Believing what you hear is a matter of trusting your partner to say what is true for him or her. At times this is difficult for some people. For instance, suppose a woman tells her partner that she loves him. They've been having some arguments lately and he isn't sure he believes her. Where does this leave them? She's feeling hurt that he doesn't believe her, and she feels pressured to try and prove her love. He's feeling insecure. About all they can talk about is whether she really loves him or not. Until he believes that what she says is true for her, effective communication will be difficult, if not impossible. Believing what your partner says does represent a risk sometimes, but it is well worth it because it makes interpersonal communication so much more constructive.
2. Believe that you're both on the same side. Here again we are talking about trust. Many couples wind up having difficulty communicating because they see themselves as being on opposite sides. When two people love each other, it is assumed that they want the best for each other and that they won't deliberately try to hurt one another. When you trust that your partner will be considerate of your feelings and that he or she will not try to hurt you, you can feel far more comfortable being open and honest about your feelings and desires. Since

openness and honesty are critical in personal communication, trusting that you're on the same side is essential.

3. Accept your partner. This doesn't mean you have to like everything your partner says or does. For example, you may dislike it when your partner smokes. but judging this behavior or refusing to accept it will probably not change it — and certainly not without creating resentment in both parties. There will be many things about your partner that he or she will not change. And for the most part, you will find yourself a lot happier accepting these things as realities.

We'd like to point out that you can change only your own communication behavior. You cannot directly modify your partner's behavior if he or she doesn't want to change. Don't be discouraged by this. You will find that your communications will improve significantly even if only you are using "I" language. Also, if your partner is resisting using "I" language, setting a good example yourself will improve your chances of persuading him or her of the value of "I" language.

GOAL

We want you to be able to converse with the people you love or care for in "I" language. In this chapter, you will be taking your first steps toward this goal. You will be asked to identify when "I" language is and is not being used. You'll also be asked to translate into "I" language phrases and sentences that are not "I" language.

DEFINITION

"I" language is a verbal way of expressing information about your own desires, goals, and feelings. "I" language is also an attitude.

The rules for using "I" language are:

1. Start every sentence about feelings with the pronoun "I" rather than with second or third person pronouns.
2. Use verbs that imply "want" rather than "should."
3. Make your feelings or concerns known before asking a question rather than hiding them behind a question.
4. When inquiring about another person's feelings or behavior, limit yourself to asking what the person is feeling rather than asking for justification of those feelings.
5. Stick to how you or another person is feeling or behaving now rather than generalizing about the past or predicting the future.
6. Be conscientious in expressing what you know about your feelings and desires. When you don't know, commit yourself to finding out and letting the other person know rather than just saying, "I don't know," "I don't care."

NOTE:

Be aware that when you first start using "I" language, it may feel awkward or stilted. We would like to assure you that the more you practice using "I" language, the more natural it will sound to you.

ELABORATION

Using "I" language can greatly enhance communication between two people who care for each other. In "I" language you express only your own desires, goals, and feelings. If you are expressing the feelings of another person or if you are expressing feelings you think you should have, but don't, then you're not using "I" language.

Use of "I" language is ensured when these rules are followed:

1. Start every sentence about feelings. Avoid starting sentences with the pronoun "I"

Examples

I'm unhappy.

I feel rejected.

I'd like to go to the show.

I don't feel that way.

Note that the use of "I" indicates the person is speaking of his own feelings and taking responsibility for making those feelings known.

2. Use verbs that imply "want."

Examples

I'd like to get the laundry done.

I want to take the kids to the zoo.

I feel like getting everything fixed around the house.

Note that the verbs used above indicate that the speaker is exercising self-responsibility by acknowledging his desires.

- Avoid starting sentences with "you," "we," "let's," "that's" "I think you," or "you said."

Non-examples

You're making me unhappy.

I feel you're rejecting me.

Let's go to the show.

You're wrong about that.

The pronouns above indicate that the speaker is not taking responsibility for making his feelings known and, in the first two statements, is actually blaming someone else for his feelings.

- Avoid using verbs that imply "should," "ought," or "have to."

Non-examples

I ought to get the laundry done.

I should take the kids to the zoo.

I have to get everything fixed around the house.

The verbs used above all indicate that the speaker is allowing his actions to be influenced by something other than his own desires.

Think about this: if you can't replace a "should" with a "want," you're probably not exercising self-responsibility. You may be doing something you don't want to do for someone else or out of some sense of duty. Reconsider whether it is in your best interest.

3. Make your feelings or concerns known before asking a question.

Examples

I'm worried about your silence. I'd like to know if something is bothering you.

I get really discouraged about things being in such a mess and I'd like your help in resolving this.

I hear you saying you're not upset, but I also hear you yelling.

I'm hungry and I was wondering if you were hungry too.

Note that in the above examples the speaker makes his concerns and opinions clear before or instead of asking a question. This allows a person to answer more freely without feeling

Don't hide your concerns, opinions, feelings, or desires behind a question.

Non-examples

Why are you so quiet?

Why don't you ever pickup after yourself?

Do you always yell when you're not upset?

Aren't you hungry yet?

The examples above make it very difficult for a person to answer without feeling trapped and defensive. All of the questions above imply that the speaker really has something else on his mind. In the first and last questions, the speaker is already thinking of an answer and in the other two, questions are used to hide sarcastic opinions.

4. When inquiring about another person's feelings or behavior, limit yourself to asking what that person is feeling.

Examples

I feel a little uncomfortable because you seem tense to me this evening. I'd like to know if something is upsetting you.

I wish you hadn't had such a hard day. Is there anything I can do to help make it better?

I feel perfectly comfortable when things are disheveled. I'd like to know how you feel.

Note that in the examples above the speaker limits himself to finding out what the feelings are and what can be done. There are no assumptions made and no requests for justification. The person can answer without having to defend, deny, or justify his or herself.

Don't ask others to justify why they feel the way they do or why they behave the way they do.

Non-examples

Why are you so tense and upset?

Why do you let yourself get so upset over one lousy day?

Why are you so picky?

The examples above would most likely result in defensive behavior because the person feels he has to justify something that may not make any sense to someone else. "Why" is irrelevant because feelings are facts. Questioning why they exist can lead to depression as a result of endless self-analysis. Since you are the world's authority on yourself. You either know or you don't.

5 Stick to how you or another person is feeling or behaving now. Use phrases like "up until now" or "in the past."

Examples

I'm unhappy at the way this has been handled in the past and I'm afraid it can't be solved.

I'm afraid you'll think I'm silly for feeling this way. I'd like to know how you really reel.

In the past I haven't been able to get through to you. I hope I can make myself clear this time.

Note that in the examples above the speaker is concentrating on present feelings or checking out past feelings. The speaker is not assuming that what has occurred in the past will occur again. This is critical because people's feelings and behavior change.

6 Be conscientious in expressing what you know about your feelings and desires. When you don't know, commit yourself to finding out and letting the other person know.

Examples

I know how I feel about this, but it's going to take some time and energy to explain.

I don't know what I think about that, but I'll work on it and let you know when I figure it out.

I don't have much depth of feeling about what we eat tonight except that I'm not in the mood for anything rich. I'm open to suggestions.

Note that in the statements above the speaker is giving whatever information he knows about his feelings or preferences.

Don't generalize about the past or predict future feelings or behavior. Avoid using words like "always" and "never."

Non-examples

I'm unhappy at the way this problem has been handled in the past. You'll never change, will you?

You probably think I'm acting silly like you always do.

You never listen to me and you never will.

In the examples above, the speaker is predicting how the other person will feel or behave based on past experience. The speaker is assuming that the other person's feelings and behavior will never change.

Don't say, "I don't know," or "I don't care," when you do know and you do care. When you honestly don't know, don't just leave it at that.

Non-Examples

Oh, I just don't know.

I don't know.

I don't care what we eat.

In the statements above, the speaker is being lazy about expressing his feelings and preferences. In the second example, he says, "don't know," and leaves the listener hanging.

"I" Language**NOT "I" Language**

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|--|---|
| <p>1. Sentences about feelings that begin with:
I</p> <p>2. Verbs implying want or desire such as:
Want, Prefer, Like, Feel</p> <p>3. Statements making the speaker's concerns and feelings clear before asking a question.</p> <p>4. Questions that:
Ask what the person feels. Ask what a person wants to do. Ask what can be done to help. Etc.</p> <p>5. Statements or questions that:
Deal with what a person feels now. Check out whether a person's past feelings are still accurate.</p> <p>6. Statements that indicate that the speaker is being conscientious in expressing what he knows about his feelings such as:
I don't know, but I'll let you know when I do. I don't have much depth of feeling on the subject, but I prefer...</p> | <p>1. Sentences about feelings that begin:
You, We, I think you, Let's, You said, That's, etc.</p> <p>2. Verbs implying "should" such as:
Should, Must, Ought, Need to, Have to, Supposed to, Got to, etc.</p> <p>3. Questions that imply that:
The speaker has something on his mind. The speaker wants a particular answer. No matter what the answer, the speaker will be critical. The speaker is actually expressing an opinion sarcastically.</p> <p>4. Questions that:
Ask why a person feels the way they do. Ask why a person behaves the way they do.</p> <p>5. Words and phrases that indicate generalizing or predicting such as:
Always, Probably, Never, (You) will, Won't/ Don't ever, (You) are, All the time, Going to, etc.</p> <p>6. Phrases that indicate that the speaker is not being conscientious about expressing what he knows about his feelings such as:
I don't know. I don't care. Anything you want.</p> |
|--|---|

The following is a summary of the information detailed in the preceding elaboration. You may find it helpful when studying the conversations in the sample conversation and practice section

SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS

FOLLOWING ARE five sets of sample conversations. The first conversation in each set presents a couple communicating *without* using "I" language.

In the commentary next to each of these conversations remarks are made about each statement. Read these commentaries only if you need help understanding why a statement is or is not "I" language.

The second conversation in each set presents a similar conversation in which the couple *is* using "I" language. You will notice that the overall tone and out- come of the "I" language conversations are very different.

Read through only as many samples as you need to be able to recognize and correct instances where "I" language is not being used.

Sample Conversation 1

Below is a sample conversation in which neither individual is using "I" language consistently. The non-use of "I" language is indicated by bold italics.

	COMMENTARY
Woman: <i>What would you like to do tonight?</i>	She is asking a question without making her intentions clear — that she wants to do something with her partner that she likes.
Man: There's a super football game between UCLA and Houston on TV tonight; I'd like to watch it.	Using he expresses what he wants to do.
Woman: <i>All you ever want</i> to do is watch football.	She uses "you" to tell him about his behavior. She also generalizes about all he ever wants to do,
Man: What do you mean? I only watched twice this week.	He reacts defensively.
Woman: Well, somehow I <i>never</i> get to do what I want to do,	Using "never," she generalizes about the situation.
Man: What would you like to do?	He asks her what she'd like to do, which is acceptable since he's already made his preference clear.
Woman: Oh, <i>I don't know</i> ; anything but watch football.	By saying, 'don't know,' she is not being conscientious about expressing her feelings. Chances are she does know what she wants and if she doesn't, she can tell him that she'll think about it and let him know.

“I” Language

The sample conversation below is similar to the one on the previous page, except the below individuals are using I” language consistently. Notice how the overall tone and the outcome differ.

Woman:	I'd like to go to the movie with you this evening and I'm wondering what you feel like doing.
Man:	There's a super football game between UCLA and Houston on TV tonight; I'd like to watch it.
Woman:	I don't really want to watch football, and I would love to have your undivided attention tonight.
Man:	I feel strongly about seeing this particular game, but it's over at nine and I'd enjoy doing something with you 'then. Would you be too tired to go to a late show?

Sample Conversation 2

Below is a sample conversation in which neither individual is consistently. The nonuse of "I" language is indicated by bold italics.

		COMMENTARY
Man:	<i>Wouldn't you like to go to bed honey?</i> It's getting late.	He asks a question without making his desires clear—That he's interested in sex.
Woman:	I <i>need</i> to finish up my homework. <i>You go ahead if you're so tired.</i>	She indicates by the use of "need" that she is doing her homework out of a sense of duty rather than desired.
Man:	I did not say I was tired.	He gets annoyed because she is not getting his message.
Woman:	Well, <i>what did you mean when you suggested we go to bed?</i>	She uses a "you" sentence rather than saying, "I don't know what you mean..."
Man:	I thought you might be interested in sex, but then <i>you never are.</i>	Using the pronoun "you" he tells her about her behavior it generalizes that she is never interested in sex
Woman:	I am too. But I did not realize that was what you had on your mind. <i>You always expect</i> me to read your mind.	She generalizes about his behavior: "You always expect..."
Man:	I sure don't know why I'd expect that since you're so lousy at it.	
Woman:	<i>You probably think</i> I am lousy bed too.	She predicts what she is thinking.
Man:	I cannot remember if you are or not.	Sarcasm and results to cover hurt feelings.

"I" Language

The sample conversation below is similar to the one on the previous page, except the below individuals are using "I" language consistently. Notice how the overall tone and the outcome differ.

Man: I'd like to get into bed with you and make love. What are your feelings about that?

Woman: I'd like to get the rest of my homework out of the way first, but then I'd love to you up on your idea.

Man: Great! See you in the bedroom.

Sample Conversation 3

Below is a sample conversation in which neither individual is using "I" language consistently.

Man:	<i>What's wrong with you?</i>	In essence, he is saying, "Why are you upset?" And he has asked a question without making his concerns clear - he may be worried about her or find her apparent depression upsetting to his mood.
Woman:	What do you mean, "What's wrong?"	She gets defensive.
Man:	Well, <i>you're</i> obviously upset about some- thing.	He talks about her feelings using "you."
Woman:	No, I'm not upset.	She uses good "I" language.
Man:	Sure, <i>you must be. You've</i> got that look on your face.	Again, he is talking about her feelings and behavior and using "you."
Woman:	What look?	She's confused by his interpretation of her facial expression.
Man:	The look that <i>always</i> means, "look out!"	He generalizes about what her facial expression always means.
Woman:	<i>You're</i> imagining things. There's nothing wrong.	She talks about his behavior and uses "you."
Man:	Oh, come on! <i>Why are you denying it?</i>	Here, he asks her why she acts the way she does.
Woman:	I'm NOT upset!	She is getting upset and frustrated because he won't believe her.
Man:	<i>Then why are you yelling?</i>	He asks a question that barely conceals his satisfaction at having been right all along.

“I” Language

The sample conversation below is similar to the one on the previous page, except that below the individuals are using “I” language consistently. Notice how the overall tone and the outcome differ.

Man: I’m concerned about you. I’m wondering if anything is bothering you.

Woman: No. There’s nothing bothering me.

Man: I wondered because your face looked troubled.

Woman: I’ve just been trying to remember where I put an important receipt.

Man: Is it something I can help with?

Woman: No. It’s really not that important.

Sample Conversation 4

Below is a sample conversation in which neither is using "I" language consistently.

Man:	I really should get the yard work done this weekend.	Using "should," he indicates that he is acting out or a sense of obligation rather than desire.
Woman:	I was hoping you'd take me shopping. We really ought to get the wallpaper for the bathroom before my folks come.	She uses "we" and indicates that both of them "ought to" shop for wallpaper rather than talking about her own desire to do it.
Man:	What do you mean "we"? I've got to get all this stuff done and you want me to shop for wallpaper?	He objects to the use of "we" and then goes on to talk about what he has to do.
Woman:	Well, we ought to make the decision together I guess you don't care if the bathroom looks like a mess when my folks come.	Again, she uses "we" and talks about what they both "ought to" do.
Man:	Do you really think they'll care so much that it'll ruin their visit? Besides, you never agree with me on decorating decisions anyway.	He asks a question that conceals his opinion — that her folks won't really miss the wallpaper. He also generalizes about her behavior using "never."
Woman:	Why are you being so argumentative?	She asks him why he is behaving the way he is.

“I” Language

The sample conversation below is similar to the one on the previous page, except that below the individuals are using “I” language consistently. Notice how the overall tone and the outcome differ.

- Man:** I want to get the yard work done over the weekend.
- Woman:** I was hoping you'd take me shopping. I'd like to get wallpaper for the bathroom before my folks come. Would you have any time to help me
- Man:** I'm interested, but at this point I don't think I'll have any time. What did you want to do?
- Woman:** Well, I like sharing decorating decisions with you, and I don't want to get something you don't like.
- Man:** If you narrow the choice down to two or three samples and bring them home, it would save me time and I'll be happy to give you my input. Or, call me from the shop after you've looked around and I'll run over for a few minutes.

Sample Conversation 5

Below is a sample conversation in which neither individual is using "I" language consistently.

Man:	I'm getting my Christmas list together. What would you like this year?	He uses "I" language to announce his intentions before asking a question.
Woman:	I don't know. Surprise me.	By saying, "I don't know," she is not being conscientious about expressing her desires. She probably has some ideas about what she wants. If not, she can tell him that she'll give it some thought and let him know.
Man:	I don't feel comfortable about doing that.	He uses language to express his feelings,
Woman:	Well, I don't care what you get me as long as you pick it.	By saying, "don't care," she is not being conscientious about expressing her feelings.
Man:	I do that every year and you never like what I choose.	He talks about her behavior using "you" and generalizes that she never likes what he gives her.
Woman:	I didn't like the hunting rifle you got me last year. How stupid can you get? You did that just to be mean.	She uses "you" to put down his behavior and his motives.
Man:	I'd hoped you would get involved and start hunting with me.	He uses "I" language to express his wants.
Woman:	I bet! You just wanted another gun for your collection.	Sarcasm and she talks about his behavior.
Man:	Why don't you just tell me what you want? That way I won't get you something you hate.	He asks a question but is really trying to express the opinion that he wants her to tell him what she wants. At the same time, he is asking her why she behaves the way she does.
Woman:	Why don't you know what I like?	She then asks him why he behaves the way he does.

“I” Language

The sample conversation below is similar to the one on the previous page, except that below the individuals using “I” language consistently. Notice how the overall tone and the outcome differ.

Man: I'm getting my Christmas list together. What would you like this year?

Woman: I'd like to be surprised.

Man: I don't feel comfortable about doing that

Woman: Well, I don't know right now what I want, but I'll think about it and give you a list.

Man: I feel much better about that.

PRACTICE

FOLLOWING ARE five practice items. Each presents a sample conversation like the ones you looked at in the previous section. In Part A for each item, you are to underline or highlight the phrases, words, or sentences that are *not* "I" language. In Part B, take each instance that you indicated and rewrite it in "I" language. *Don't* recreate the conversation as we did in the sample conversation section. Here we only want you to practice translating specific words, phrases, or sentences into "I" language.

For each part of each item there is feedback on the following pages. The feedback for Part A will show you what words, phrases, and sentences we identified as *not* being "I" language. Don't worry if your underlining or highlighting isn't exactly like ours. As in the sample conversations, the commentary presents remarks about each statement. Read the commentary only if you need help understanding the feedback. Wherever you have questions, use the definition to help you resolve them. In Part B feedback, we have rewritten, in "I" language, those instances we indicated in Part A feedback. Your rewrites probably won't be quite the same in all but again, where you have doubts, check the definition or the list following the elaboration.

After completing each item (both parts) look at the feedback. If you feel you 're doing well after the first couple of items, go on to the next chapter. If you seem to be having trouble at any point, go back and look over the definition, elaboration, and sample conversations. When you feel you have resolved the difficulty, continue with the practice.

Practice 1

Part A.

Underline or highlight wherever "I" language is not used.

1. Woman: Why are you such a slob?
2. Man: What! ?
3. Woman: You never put your clothes in the hamper.
4. Man: I wouldn't say never. You're too picky anyway.
5. Woman: I am not. We should keep our home neat and clean and that's impossible when you 're so sloppy.
6. Man: Why can't you just be happy with a slightly less than spotless house?
7. Woman: Why can't you do a little thing like put your clothes in the hamper?
8. Man: Why do you get so upset over such a little thing? .
9. Woman: I guess it just seems like a little thing because you have such a little mind.

REMINDER

Don't forget to write your answers.

Part B.

For each phrase or sentence you indicated on the previous page, rewrite that specific phrase or sentence in "I" -language. Remember, the phrases you rewrite won't necessarily make a complete conversation.

1. Woman: _____

2. Man: _____

3. Woman: _____

4. Man: _____

5. Woman: _____

6. Man: _____

7. Woman: _____

8. Man: _____

9. Woman: _____

Feedback 1

Below, we have indicated instances we identified as not being 'I' language. Don't be concerned if your responses are slightly different.

		COMMENTARY
1. Woman:	<i>Why are you such a slob?</i>	She is asking him why he behaves the way he does and at the same time is actually expressing her opinion that he is a slob. Probably what she really feels is that his sloppiness causes her a problem.
2. Man:	What!?	He's confused and caught off guard by her question.
3. Woman:	<i>You never</i> put your clothes in the hamper.	She uses "you" and generalizes about his behavior by saying "never."
4. Man:	I wouldn't say never. You're too picky anyway.	Using "you" he talks about her behavior.
5. Woman:	I am not. <i>We should</i> keep our home neat and clean and <i>that's</i> impossible when <i>you're</i> so sloppy.	"We should" implies that she at least, is acting out of obligation and including him "That's" and "you" are also used.
6. Man:	<i>Why can't you just be happy with a slightly less than spotless house?</i>	He's questioning why and also expressing an opinion.
7. Woman:	<i>Why can't you do a little thing like put your clothes in the hamper?</i>	She's questioning why and also expressing an opinion.
8. Man:	<i>Why do you get so upset over such a little thing?</i>	Again, he's questioning why and expressing an opinion.
9. Woman:	I guess it just seems like a little thing because you have such a little mind.	She uses "you" to talk about his behavior.

Part B.

Below, we have rewritten the phrases and sentences previous page in "I" language. Your answers may differ so if you're in doubt, check them against the definition to ensure that you have used "I" language.

Woman: I get very upset when the house is a mess and I'd like to have some help keeping it neat.

Man:

Woman: I find your clothes on the floor and around the hamper a lot of the time and I get tired of picking them up to make the room look neat. .

Man: I like to drop them where I please.

Woman: I like to keep our home neat and clean. I'd really like to have some help in keeping it that way.

Man: I can be happy with a slightly less than spotless house.

Woman: I would really appreciate having the clothes put in the hamper because . it makes a great difference to me in how the room looks and it saves me work.

Man: I can see that it's important to you, even though I don't understand why.

Woman: (This judgmental statement cannot be written in "I" language and is better left unsaid.)

PRACTICE 2

Part A.

Underline or highlight wherever "I" language is not used.

1. Woman: What would you like for dinner tonight?
2. Man: I don't care — it's up to you.
3. Woman: Let's have fish sticks.
4. Man: We have fish sticks all the time.
5. Woman: It's your fault for keeping me on such a tight budget. Fish sticks are cheap.
6. Man: Well I'm sick of them! Why can't you serve something else?
7. Woman: Like what?
6. Man: I don't care — anything but fish sticks.

Part B.

For each phrase or sentence you indicated on the previous page; rewrite that specific phrase or sentence in "I" language. Remember, the phrases you rewrite won't necessarily make a complete conversation.

1. Woman: _____

2. Man: _____

3. Woman: _____

4. Man: _____

5. Woman: _____

6. Man: _____

7. Woman: _____

8. Man: _____

9. Woman: _____

FEEDBACK 2

Below, we have indicated instances we identified as not being "I" language. Don't be concerned if your responses are slightly different.

	COMMENTARY
Woman: <i>What would you like for dinner tonight?</i>	She has asked a question without making her intentions or preferences clear.
Man: <i>I don't care — it's up to you.</i>	He is not being conscientious about expressing his feelings because he does care.
Woman: <i>Let's</i> have fish sticks.	She includes him by saying
Man: We have fish sticks <i>all the time</i> .	He generalizes about her behavior, using "all the time." He also uses "we."
Woman: <i>It's your fault</i> for keeping me on such a tight budget. Fish sticks are cheap.	She blames him, using a variation of "you."
Man: Well I'm sick of them! Why can't you serve something else?	He asks why she behaves the way she does.
Woman: <i>Like what?</i>	She still hasn't made her preferences clear.
Man: <i>I don't care</i> — anything but fish sticks.	Again he says "I don't care" when he actually does care.

Part B

Below, we have rewritten the phrases and sentences previous page in "I" language. Your answers may differ so if you're in doubt, check them against the definition to ensure that you have used "I" language.

Woman: I'm getting ready to serve dinner and was wondering if you had any preferences.

Man: I hadn't thought about it much. Nothing special comes to mind, but I'm open to suggestions.

Woman: I prefer fish sticks.

Man: I'm feeling a little tired of fish sticks myself.

Woman: I agree, but I try to stick to our budget and they're cheap.

Man: I'd like to make an exception and have something else,

Woman: I'd like fried chicken. What did you have in mind?

Man: I'm still having trouble thinking of something and I'd like a few more suggestions.

PRACTICE 3

Part A.

Underline or highlight wherever "I" language is not used.

1. Woman: We sure have a lousy night life!
2. Man: What's wrong with our night life?
3. Woman: I feel neglected because you're always watching sports on TV.
4. Man: Maybe it'd be more interesting if we had sex more often.
5. Woman: I'd like that, but I don't feel satisfied lately.
6. Man: Is there something you want that you're not getting?
7. Woman: Time. I don't have enough time to come before you do.
8. Man: I didn't know that. I've been thinking you had an orgasm every time.
9. Woman: I faked it sometimes.
10. Man: I'm feeling really upset about this and I'd like to talk about it some more to find out what we can do to make it more satisfying for both of us.

For each phrase or sentence you indicated on the previous page, rewrite that phrase or sentence in "I" language. .

1. Woman: _____

2. Man: _____

3. Woman: _____

4. Man: _____

5. Woman: _____

6. Man: _____

7. Woman: _____

8. Man: _____

9. Woman: _____

FEEDBACK 3

Part A.

Below, we have indicated instances we identified as not being "I" language. Don't be concerned if your responses are slightly different.

		COMMENTARY
Woman:	<i>We sure have a lousy night life!</i>	She includes him in their lousy night life by using "we".
Man:	What's wrong with our night life?	His question is acceptable here because his intentions are obvious. Her statement has opened the door for him to ask what she means.
Woman:	I feel neglected because <i>you're always</i> watching sports on TV.	She generalizes about his behavior and uses the pronoun "you."
Man:	Maybe <i>it'd</i> be more interesting if <i>we</i> had sex more often.	Using "it'd" and "we," he talks about her wants instead of his own.
Woman:	I'd like that, but I don't feel satisfied lately.	She uses "I" language to talk about her wants and feelings.
Man:	Is there something you want that you're not getting?	His question is acceptable because she has already implied that there is some, thing missing.
Woman:	Time. I don't have enough time to come before you do.	She's still using "I" language.
Man:	I didn't know that. I've been thinking you had an orgasm every time.	He's still using "I" language.
Woman:	I faked it sometimes.	"I" language
Man:	I'm feeling really upset about this and I'd like to talk about it some more to find out what we can do to make it more satisfying for both of us.	"I" language except for his use of "we."

Part B.

Below, we have rewritten the phrases and sentences previous page in "I" language, Your answers may differ so if you're in doubt, check them against the definition to ensure that you have used "I" language.

Woman: I'm not happy with our night life.

Man:

Woman: I feel neglected when you're watching sports on TV.

Man: I'd like to have sex more often.

Woman:

Man:

Woman:

Man:

Woman:

Man: I'm feeling upset about this and I'd like to talk about it some more to find out what I can do to make it more satisfying for both of us.

PRACTICE 4

Part A.

Underline or highlight wherever "I" language is not used.

Man: What would you like to do on our vacation?

Woman I don't know. What would you like to do?

Man: I'd like to be perfectly frank about what I want and I'd like to hear what you honestly want instead of fooling around with "I" don't know — what do you want.

Woman: Okay, I'd like to go somewhere tropical where I can lie in the sun and watch people.

Man: I'm not interested in lying in the sun, but I would like to play some sports like volleyball, racquetball, tennis, et cetera. That could be tropical. What kind of night life appeals to you?

Woman: Someplace with some entertainment. Also, I like the idea of cooking out on the beach a couple of times.

Man: That appeals to me too.

Part B

For each phrase or sentence you indicated on the previous page, rewrite that phrase or sentence in "I" language. .

1. Woman: _____

2. Man: _____

3. Woman: _____

4. Man: _____

5. Woman: _____

6. Man: _____

7. Woman: _____

8. Man: _____

9. Woman: _____

FEEDBACK 4

Below, we have indicated instances we identified as not being "I" language. Don't be concerned if your responses are slightly different.

			COMMENTARY
1.	Man	What would you like to do on our vacation?	He asks a question without making his intentions clear.
2.	Woman	I don't know. What would you like to do?	She indicates that she doesn't know, when she actually does have some ideas as indicated later in the conversation.
3.	Man:	I'd like to be perfectly frank about what I want and I'd like to hear what you honestly want instead of fooling around with "I don't know— what do you want."	He uses "I" language to express his wants.
4.	Woman:	Okay, I'd like to go somewhere tropical where I can lie in the sun and watch people.	She uses "I" language to state her wants.
5.	Man:	I'm not interested in lying in the sun, but I would like to play some sports like volleyball, racquetball, tennis, et cetera. That could be tropical. What kind of night-life appeals to you?	This question is asked before he states his preference. Don't be concerned if you didn't catch this one.
6.	Woman:	Someplace with some entertainment. Also, I like the idea of cooking out on the beach a couple of times.	She's still using "I" language.
7.	Man:	That appeals to me too.	"That" is acceptable here because he's talking about himself and what he likes.

Part B

Below, we have rewritten the phrases and sentences previous page in "I" language. Your answers may differ so if you're in doubt, check them against the definition to ensure that you have used "I" language.

1. Man: I'd like to start making vacation plans and I was wondering what you wanted to do.
2. Woman: Let me think and while I'm thinking, I'd like to hear where you want to go and what you want to do.
3. Man:
4. Woman:
5. Man: I'd like to have our evenings somewhat simple and inexpensive so we can stay longer. What are your thoughts?
6. Woman
7. Man:

PRACTICE 5

Part A.

Underline or highlight wherever "I" language is not used.

1.	Woman:	Are you in a good mood?
2.	Man:	Why? What have you done now?
3.	Woman:	I went grocery shopping..
4.	Man:	What are the damages?
5.	Woman:	One hundred and twenty dollars.
6.	Man:	One hundred and twenty dollars!! You must think I'm made of money.
7.	Woman:	Whatever you're made of, you've got to eat.
8.	Man:	Your idea of eating is lobster and filet mignon. You never think about economy, do you?
9.	Woman:	Yes I do, but you never think about quality
10.	Man:	Why can't you combine the two?
11.	Woman:	Why don't you just do it yourself from now on?

Part B.

For each phrase or sentence you indicated on the previous page, rewrite that phrase or sentence in "I" language. .

1. Woman: _____

2. Man: _____

3. Woman: _____

4. Man: _____

5. Woman: _____

6. Man: _____

7. Woman: _____

8. Man: _____

9. Woman: _____

FEEDBACK 5

Part A.

Below, we have indicated instances we identified as not being "I" language. Don't be concerned if your responses are slightly different.

		COMMENTARY
1. Woman:	<i>Are you in a good mood?</i>	She asks a question without stating her feelings first.
2. Man	<i>Why? What have you done now?</i>	With another question, he represents his opinion that she has done something wrong.
3. Woman:	I went grocery shopping.	No comment.
4. Man:	<i>What are the damages?</i>	He gets suspicious of her motives for asking the question and comes back with a question representing his opinion that she's spent too much.
5. Woman:	One hundred and twenty dollars.	No comment.
6. Man:	One hundred and twenty dollars!! <i>You must think</i> I'm made of money.	Using "you" he talks about what she thinks.
7. Woman:	Whatever you're made of, <i>you've got</i> to eat.	Using "have to" she tells him about what his obligation is. She also uses "you" in talking about his behavior
8. Man	<i>Your idea</i> of eating is lobster and filet mignon. <i>You never think about economy do you?</i>	Using "you*" he talks about her feelings and generalizes about what she'll never do. He uses a question to express his opinion.
9. Woman:	Yes I do, but <i>you never think</i> about quality.	She generalizes about what he will never do
10. Man:	<i>Why can 't you combine the two?</i>	He uses a question instead of expressing his opinion that he'd like her to combine quality and economy. He is also asking her why she behaves the way she does.
11. Woman:	<i>Why don 't you just do it yourself from now on.</i>	She uses a question to hide her opinion — that she is uncomfortable doing the grocery shopping when she has to face so much criticism.

Part B.

Below, we have rewritten the phrases and sentences previous page in "I" language. Your answers may differ so if you're in doubt, check them against the definition to ensure that you have used "I" language.

- Woman: I have some bad news. I'm hoping you're in a good mood*
- Man: Oh! What is it?
- Woman:
- Man: I see. I guess the bad news is that you spent a lot of money. Is that it?
- Woman:
- Man: I'm really distressed by that amount.
- Woman: (This cannot really be said in "I" language.)
- Man: I'm really concerned about economizing.
- Woman: I am too, but I like to get quality for my money as well.
- Man: I wonder if it's possible to combine the two.
- Woman: I wouldn't mind you taking it over if you like.