

Using I Statements to Communicate Clearly, Reduce Stress, and Set Boundaries

Strong Culture, LLC

Communication,
Boundaries, And
Sustainable Work
Practices

What Are I Statements?

A practical tool to help you communicate clearly, navigate stress, and protect your capacity at work

I statements are a communication technique that express your thoughts, feelings, and needs from your own perspective—without blame or criticism. Instead of starting with “you,” which can feel accusatory, I statements focus on your experience. This reduces defensiveness, supports clearer dialogue, and creates space for more productive and respectful communication. This is not just about communication—it’s about taking ownership of your internal experience in real time.

Why They Work

- Shift you from reaction to awareness of your internal experience
- Encourage empathy and active listening
- Help you stay grounded under stress instead of reacting with blame or avoidance
- Support clearer, more professional communication.

Building I Statements

"I feel [emotion] when [behavior] because [impact]."

Identify the feeling, the behavior, and the impact. Then clearly express your need or request for change.

The Structure



**Step 1: Feel
Name the Feeling**

Start with "I feel..." to name your emotion clearly and specifically. Avoid vague terms; be precise about your emotional state.



**Step 2: When
Describe the Situation**

Add "when..." to describe the specific behavior or situation objectively, without judgment or interpretation.



**Step 3: Because
Explain the Impact and Need**

Conclude with "because..." to explain the impact on you, then add a request for change.

Examples

01

Instead of: "I'll take that on. Try: I feel overwhelmed when I take on additional work because it exceeds what I can sustainably manage. I need to be more intentional about what I commit to moving forward.

02

Instead of: "You're always interrupting in meetings." Try: "I feel frustrated when I'm interrupted because I lose my train of thought and struggle to contribute fully."

I Statements Help You:

- Communicate clearly under pressure
- Reduce overcommitment and stress
- Set boundaries in real time
- Build trust and clarity in professional relationships