

# Spotlight Marriage and Relationships

**Lesson Title:** Using “I” Statements

**Grade Band Level:** High School

**Extension for:** SEL Spotlight High School

**Topic:** Using “I” Statements in Marriage and Relationships

**Essential Question:** How can we prevent unnecessary conflict in an intimate relationship using “I” Statements?

## Materials and Preparation

- Paper/writing instruments

## Procedures

Review and restate session norms. These should remind students how to interact and communicate respectfully. Essential question should be prominently displayed.

[1-2 minutes]

## Activity 1

- Students may or may not be familiar with the term “I” statement.
- All too often people use “you” statements when they are angry or upset. This is true in a variety of relationships, not just intimate partner relationships.
- “You” statements often accuse and lead to conflict and anger because the persons saying the “you” statement has already made an assumption about the other person. Often “you” statements are overly generalized.
- Some examples could include (you can use your own examples if you like):
  - “You are always late.”
  - “You are lazy.”
  - “You don’t love me.”
- Ask students why these statements would be wrong and why the listener likely would become angry if one of these statements was said to them.
- Provide feedback as needed.

[5-10 minutes]

## Activity 2

### Reflection Questions.

- Ask students to think watching a movie. If one of the characters in a romantic relationship said, "You don't love me" what would you expect the other character to do or say?
- Give students wait time to write down some thoughts.
- What about if a character says, "you care more about your dog than me!" what might you expect?
- Discuss with students that that while by the end of the movie, the problem may be resolved in real life statements like that can damage or end a relationship.
- Ask students to try using an "I" statement instead of the "you" statements above. An example of an "I" statement could be, "when you spend so much time with your dog, I feel that you don't care about me as much".

[5-10 minutes]

## Activity 3

- Using your knowledge of students in the group, place students into groups of 2 or 3. Ask groups to brainstorm some ideas of potential conflict in a relationship. Avoid sexual situations or situations that could likely be serious enough to cause a break up, like cheating. Examples could range from fairly serious like wanting to spend too much time (or not enough time) together to somewhat absurd, like being embarrassed because the other person uses steak sauce on a hamburger and fries.
- Once students have developed some scenarios, have each group develop a "you" statement that one partner could say that would likely escalate the conflict and two or three "I" statements that that would help get the point across in a respectful and relationship confirming manner.
- Within their small groups have students practice saying their statements and receive feedback.
- Once both students have practiced within their groups, have students come back together in a circle and share their scenarios, "you" statements and "I" statements with the entire group. Facilitator should provide feedback as necessary.

[20-30 minutes]

## Conclusion:

### Debriefing questions.

- How does an "I" statement help us communicate with someone we are close to?
- Do you believe that taking the time to think about using an "I" statement helps your relationship partner listen more respectfully (or in a more caring manner) to you?