



Using I Statements

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a sacred space. We light the chalice in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words:

If your love for me requires that I hide parts of who I am, then you don't really love me. Love is never a request for silence.

~DeRay Mckesson, American civil rights activist

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What is the benefit to using I statements?
2. How does using I statements influence your sharing and your listening in Covenant Circle?
3. Are there steps that are helpful when making I statements?
4. What happened when you used I statements? Or what happened when you did not?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings)

Readings

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions or comment on something else that the questions or readings bring up for you.

(This is a good time to take a brief break—breathing, bathroom, snack, etc.)

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

Only through our connectedness to others can we really know and enhance the self. And only through working on the self can we begin to enhance our connectedness to others.

~ Dr. Harriet Lerner, Author, Psychologist

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

Each of us is meant to have a character all our own, to be what no other can exactly be, and do what no other can exactly do. ~ William Ellery Channing

I-Statements give others information about us in a way that is far less threatening than the alternative: You-Statements. They form the bedrock for cooperation because they connect people, build trust, and create healthier relationships. Like magic, I-Statements and You-Statements trigger predictable responses from others, time after time. When hearing a You statements one can feel angry, resistant, ashamed, distrustful and/or guilty. Even a compliment phrased as a You statement can result in the receiver feeling suspicious. In contrast, I-statements connect people, and can elicit empathy. Even in highly charged emotional situations, I-Statements help us stay more connected than we might otherwise. ~Adapted from *I-Statements*, The Human Potential Center, [I Statements--Human Potential Center](#)

Using “I” Statements in Covenant Circle: Learning to speak from an “I space” is important. This kind of speech is the flip side of deep listening. No one can argue with your personal viewpoint, and you don’t make assumptions about theirs, so this kind of conversation is peaceful, and when you speak from your own experience, others in your circle get to know you.

“I” statements reflect:

- How you feel about something – “I feel happy to be here.” Or “I like what you said tonight”
- Your beliefs – “I believe that this is better than that.”
- Your opinions – “I am in favor of solar energy tax credits.”
- Your experience – “I find it hard to remember to speak from an I space.”
- Letting people know who you are – “I am dedicated to figuring out ways to help in my community.”

I Statements are NOT about:

- What you know about something – “Research has shown...,” or something you have read. Your personal experience always trumps your special knowledge. (This is a hard one!)
- Generalizations – “UUs are _____.”
- Statements that use a generic “you” when you are talking about your own experience – “Well, you’re walking down the street and you look in a shop window and impulse grabs you and the next thing you know you have a new widget that you don’t really need.”
- Disguised “you” statements – “I feel that is a crazy idea.”

Following this **5-Step formula** can help you make better I-statements. Remember to be as concise and specific as possible. *It helps a lot to practice!* ~Adapted from [BethRogerson.com](#)

1. **When you...** (State the specific action your partner takes.)
2. **I feel...** (Share how you feel when your partner does that thing.)
3. **I imagine...** (Try to imagine your partner’s perspective. How might *they* see the situation? *Imagine a good intention.*)
4. **I need/want...** (Share what the frustrated part of you needs in this situation. Make sure you are stating what **you** need, *not* what you think your partner should do.)
5. **Would you...** (Make a specific and concrete request of your partner.)

Other online resource: [Inner Space Therapy-improving communication](#)