

“I Feel” Statements

You get to choose how you feel. Another person cannot *make* you feel something; *you* choose to feel it. Their behavior may lead to you feeling hurt, angry or upset in some way, but ultimately, it is *your* feeling and *your* choice.

When talking with someone about how you feel about their behavior, it is helpful to start with how you feel first instead of what their behavior was. Often, when someone hears, “when YOU do this”, they start to shut down or come up with ways to defend themselves. By starting with “I feel”, you take responsibility for your feelings and communicate how your feelings relate to their behavior.

I feel (state feeling) when you (state behavior).

Example:

“I feel hurt when you forget our anniversary.”

If you know why you feel the way you do you can add a because on the end. Sometimes we see clearly why the behavior led to a specific feeling. This is the time to use the second example below. However, sometimes we don’t know why we feel the way we do. If this is the case, leave out the ‘because’.

I feel (state feeling) when you (state behavior)
because (state reason).

Example:

“I feel hurt when you forget our anniversary because it means a lot to me.”

Practicing

When you first start using “I feel” statements, practice. It is helpful to practice with positive scenarios first.

Set some time aside and think about positive things that your partner has done in the past. Practice the “I feel” statements using these positive examples.