

“I” Statement Feedback



STEP 1. Four-Part “I” Statement

Part 1. When you... (Factual description of the person’s behavior or action)

The first part of the “I” statement may refer to:

- Recurring behaviors
“When you are unable to meet deadlines and don’t inform me in a timely way...”
- One isolated incident
“When you told the Associate Director that the draft recommendation would be ready Thursday without first checking with me...”

Be specific

“When you said our research was ‘really poorly done’...”

NOT: *“When you were so negative about our research...”*

Be descriptive, not evaluative

“When you misplace documents...”

NOT: *“When you are careless...”*

Part 2. I feel/felt... (The feeling you’ve experienced as a result of the behavior or action)

The second part of the statement expresses a feeling:

- *“I felt worried.” “I feel frustrated.”*

You can express feelings without saying the word *feel*:

- *“I got concerned.” “I was surprised.”*

Express real feelings, not judgments

“I was surprised and irritated.”

NOT: *“I felt disrespected.”*

“I feel frustrated.”

NOT: *“I feel you’re not committed.”*

Part 3. Because... (The consequences of the behavior or action)

The third part of the statement addresses the direct, factual consequences of the other person’s behavior or action:

- *“...because I didn’t get a chance to raise my concerns.”*
- *“...because I wasn’t sure I could meet the deadline.”*
- *“...because I’d promised to make a decision by 5pm.”*

Avoid slipping into speculation, judgment, or blame

“...because you never thought about how this would affect my work.”

“...because this wasn’t fair to our team.”

“...because you obviously forgot about this deliverable.”

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Part 4. I want... (Your own want in this situation)

In the final part of the statement, directly express a want. These statements can begin with various formulations: *“I want...” “I would like...” “I would prefer...”*

- *“I want to know I can count on you to follow through on the commitments you make.”*
- *“I want to make sure the deadlines we set are realistic.”*
- *“I would like to be confident that you’re giving the team clear and accurate information.”*
- *“I would prefer for us to communicate more frequently.”*

Four-Part “I” Statement Examples

When you...	I feel/felt...	Because...	I want...
<i>When you told your team about the proposed reorganization plan before it was official...</i>	<i>I got really upset...</i>	<i>Because they did not have the context necessary to fully understand the implications.</i>	<i>I would like us to work together to provide consistent, clear, and accurate messages about upcoming changes.</i>
<i>When you start talking about divergent topics in our meetings—like the “staffing changes” this morning...</i>	<i>I get impatient...</i>	<i>Because it takes away from the time we allot to address the core project-related issues we need to discuss.</i>	<i>In our meetings, I would prefer for all of us to focus our full attention on the project-related issues.</i>
<i>When you provide clear, well-thought-out updates to management regarding your case...</i>	<i>I get reassured...</i>	<i>Because I know I can depend on you to be thorough in your approach.</i>	<i>I’d love to have others in the firm learn from your example.</i>

The four-part “I” statement is adapted from the concept of “I-Messages,” originated by Thomas Gordon. See Gordon, T. (1971). *Parent Effectiveness Training*.

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STEP 2. Exploratory Conversation

A four-part “I” statement is just the beginning of a conversation. The next step is usually a question: “*What’s your reaction?*” “*What’s your perspective on this?*” “*Does that make sense to you?*” or “*How does that sound?*”

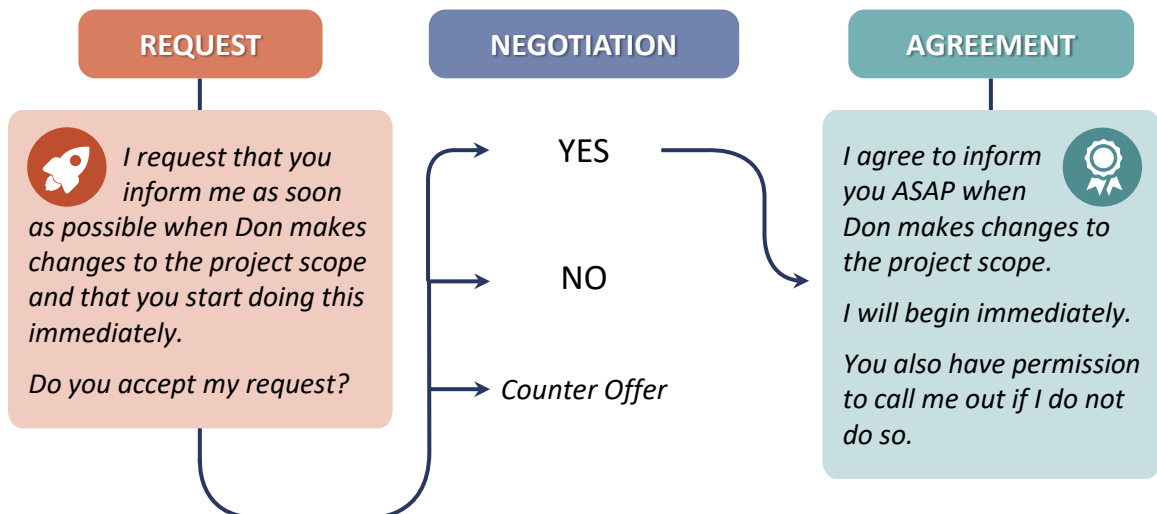
In response to your initial inquiry, the other person might:

- Ask for clarifying information from you
- Provide an explanation or clarification that alleviates your concerns
- Express their own concerns about the situation
- Suggest a solution for the issue or ask you to suggest a solution (leading to Step 3: Requests & Agreements)



STEP 3. Requests & Agreements

The final step in “I” statement feedback is moving toward a solution, which often occurs via a request, negotiation, and agreement.



“I” Statement Feedback Worksheet

Difficult Behavior:



“You” Statement:

“I” Statement	
When you...	
I feel/felt...	
Because...	
I want...	

The S-P-N-S Framework



Step 1: STOP and Notice

 Stop the Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we stop for a second? • Can we pause for a moment? • Can we take a step back right now?
 Notice the Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not clear on what we're talking about. • I'm sensing tension in our conversation. • I'm not sure we're hearing each other. • I'm a bit lost in the conversation.

Step 2: Share Perspectives

 Ask About Their Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you trying to say? • What's your perspective? • What are your thoughts? 	 Share Your Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I was trying to say is... • My perspective is... • My thoughts are...
 Capture and Paraphrase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you. Here's what I heard you say... • Okay. Let me see if I got this right... 	 Ask to be Paraphrased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to share what you heard me say? • What are you taking away from what I said?

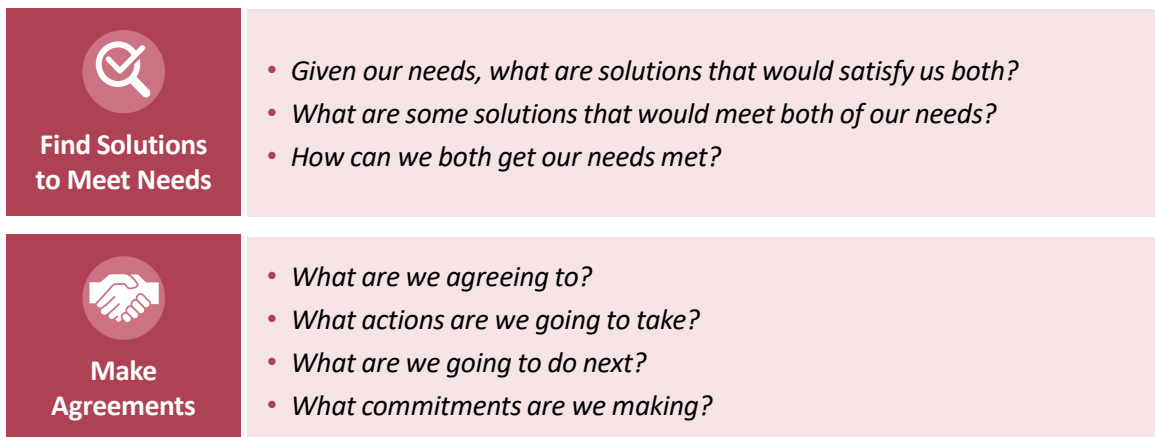
The S-P-N-S Framework



Step 3: Share Needs



Step 4: Identify Solutions



Functional Subgrouping



SEPARATE THE OPTIONS

Explore each of the ideas one at a time, so each receives full attention.



STICK TO “BUILDS”

When discussing an option, say only what is good, sensible, or useful about it. No yes-butting!



CONTRIBUTE FULLY

If you have a genuine build for an idea, speak it (even if you don't agree with the idea as a whole).

Keep going on each side (you can return to spend additional time on each side if needed) until you identify:

1. One best option (*common*)
2. A new best option (*also common*)
3. Information gaps
4. Mutually understood disagreement

These guidelines are adapted from the functional subgrouping technique as developed by Yvonne Agazarian. Functional subgrouping is the core technique of Systems-Centered® Training. See Agazarian, Y. (1997). *Systems-Centered Therapy for Groups*.

What If a Technique Doesn't Work?

Each of these three techniques—“I” statement feedback, the S-P-N-S Framework, and functional subgrouping—is geared toward achieving a collaborative win/win outcome. If you try one and don't get satisfying results, you can either:

GIVE WIN/WIN ANOTHER TRY

- ✓ Sleep on the issue and try the same technique again.
- ✓ Bring in a mediator/facilitator and try again.
- ✓ Try a different technique.

OR

DEFAULT TO WIN/LOSE

- ✓ Use your authority to push your own solution (if possible).
- ✓ Bring in a superior authority to resolve the matter.
- ✓ Acquiesce to the other person.