

## Communication Tool

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pay attention to the spirit behind your words – tone of voice, speed of words, eye contact, body language.**

### **1. What keeps me from talking to this person?** (To be used with difficult conversations)

Start with your thoughts about having the conversation. Do you fear their reaction? Not want to make something a bigger deal than necessary? Hate conflict? Don't want to make things worse? Use I-Statements to share what your hesitations are about in advance. This helps set the tone.

“I wanted to talk with you, but I've been hesitant about having the right timing and not sure if this is the best time or not.”

### **2. Facts**

What a person can **see** or **hear** about a situation; what you notice or observe. Use “I-Statements”, not “You-Statements”. (Avoid labels)

“Yesterday, when you came home from work and I asked you a couple times about how your day was you said, “I don't want to talk about it”. You didn't give me a hug like you usually do and went right in kitchen poured yourself a drink and turned on the TV. You were mostly silent the rest of the night.”

### **3. Imaginings: Interpretations/Thoughts (Use I-Statements) – State *Tentatively***

The story you tell yourself about what happened. You may be accurate or you may not, but here is where you own your interpretations as your guesses, not as facts. You're sharing your thoughts that go through your head about the situation/person that may or may not be what's really going on.

“At first I thought something happened at work that you just weren't ready to talk about. But then I started thinking that maybe you were upset with me when we talked on the phone earlier in the day about the money I spent on the new outdoor furniture.”

### **4. Feelings (Use I-Statements)**

Such as angry, sad, hurt, confused, unwanted, insecure, belittled, smothered, inadequate, happy, etc.

“Initially, I felt concerned for you when I just wanted to hear about your day. I also felt a little shut out. Then when you were quiet throughout the evening, I started feeling insecure that maybe you were upset with me. I felt bad about how much money I spent when I know you're working so hard at work”

### **5. What I Own**

Own your part of the problem in the situation. Be specific. Ways that you responded (fight or flight).

Own that you have done similar things to what the other has done in the past.

Own that you have your own past wounds that may influence your perception.

“I know sometimes you need a little time after work to unwind and I could have given you a little space before asking you questions. Sometime I know I'm not always ready to talk about something when I'm still thinking things over. I also know I did spend more money than we'd planned and I own that – if that has anything to do with you being quiet.”

### **6. What I Want – Recognize the difference between “desires” from “demands”; and between what you can control and what you can't control.**

Request what you want in the situation. Use I-Statements. Be specific.

What we really want often has several layers to it. There may be a superficial want that addresses the current situation, but we may also have deeper wants underneath.

“I want you to know that being a team in the decision we make is more important that how much I spent on the furniture. Maybe that's not even what was bothering you at all – I don't really know. If its not, then I need some reassurance that what I spent was ok with you. If its not about the money spent, then I'd just like to know more about what was bothering you so I can hear about how to best support you.”

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