

# “I” Statements for Safety Sake

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**Note:** This session may be recorded and posted online.

Please protect your anonymity (name, video, avatar) so that you feel safe to be here.

"I" Statements for Safety Sake by Caryn T. - carynAmessage@gmail.com

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In this workshop, I'll share my views & the group may discuss:

- What is an “I” statement?
- Why does CoDA encourage using “I” statements while sharing, “For Safety Sake”?
- Why does CoDA discourage using “you” and “we” statements?
- How can it make a difference in CoDA unity, meetings and individual recovery?
- How can it make a difference within personal relationships?
  
- Those who choose to, will have an opportunity to practice using “I” statements.

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**CARYN'S VIEWS...**

- An “I” statement is a first-person narrative about one’s own lived experience. It is not an opportunity to advise, criticize or make demands; those are “you” statements in disguise.
- How is it about “safety”? “I” statements keep the message contained within the reality of the person sharing without accusing, attacking or including others without their consent.
- What’s wrong with saying “you” and “we”? Neither word is wrong or bad, it’s that they often get hijacked into sentences where they don’t really belong. “You” and “we” statements can inadvertently invite crosstalk because they are not sharer-focused. They are also often used by speakers to distance themselves from their own experiences.
- What kind of a difference does it make? I notice that I feel more comfortable around people who own their own stories; it feels like they understand about boundaries, so I can relax a little. In group conscience meetings and other service work, that means I am freer to focus on the matter at hand and place principles before personalities. In sharing meetings, when boundaries are clear and respected, it helps me to let go of the worry that I might “step on someone’s toes” and it helps me to be less hypervigilant regarding my own “toes”. In personal relationships, remembering to speak only for myself keeps me right-sized and mindful of my powerlessness over them.

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**CoDA's For Safety Sake tent card**

- I use “I” statements when sharing. (I feel; I believe.)
- I share my own experience, strength, and hope—no one else’s.
- I refrain from commenting on what others share.
- I share for three to five minutes, keeping the focus on myself.
- I help myself and others by being emotionally present and honest.
- I let others experience their own feelings; I keep my advice to myself.

**GROUP DISCUSSION 5-10 MINUTES**

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## BOUNDARIES

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- External
  - My perimeter around me, not you.
    - Physical
    - Mental
    - Emotional
    - Spiritual
  - Responses
    - Walking away or Self-Defense
    - Loving Detachment
    - Prayer & Meditation
- Internal
  - Honoring my inside warning signs.
    - Physical
    - Mental
    - Emotional
    - Spiritual
  - Responses
    - Self-Care; Nutrition, Movement, Rest
    - Outreach
    - Prayer & Meditation

**GROUP DISCUSSION 5-10 MINUTES**

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## SLOGANS & AFFIRMATIONS

- HALT – Am I too: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired? [or: ill, in pain, intoxicated, etc...]
- Am I NUTS, Not Using The Steps?
- WAIT – Why Am I Talking?
- It's not my circus, they're not my monkeys.
- Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.
- I practice putting down the magnifying glass and picking up the mirror.
- I'm keep my side of the street clean.
- My self-care is not selfish, it's necessary.
- I choose to communicate with others in ways that are safe for me and respectful of them.
- \_\_\_\_\_

**GROUP DISCUSSION 5-10 MINUTES**

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**"I" Statement Prep Worksheet**

This worksheet can help me understand my own thoughts, feelings, patterns, needs and desires. Knowing myself can help me get ready to deal with any person, situation, belief, institution, etc. By identifying what is going on inside myself, I gain wisdom about what to do next; change something, accept what is, or both.

1) When \_\_\_\_\_  
(person, situation, belief, institution, etc.)

2) Does or says \_\_\_\_\_  
(verbal observation)

3) I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
(my feelings)

4) I think \_\_\_\_\_  
(my thoughts)

5) Because \_\_\_\_\_  
(my needs or desires)

6) And because \_\_\_\_\_  
(my personal patterns or characteristics)

7) I would prefer that \_\_\_\_\_  
(preferred observation)

8) However, I accept that I am powerless over \_\_\_\_\_  
(person, situation, belief, institution, etc.)

9) To protect myself, \_\_\_\_\_  
(my necessary response)

10) To care for myself, I will \_\_\_\_\_  
(my intended future through)

11) Higher Power, \_\_\_\_\_  
(person and institution)

12) I'll seek support by reaching out to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
(person, meeting, faith belief, etc.)

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## "I" STATEMENT PREP WORKSHEET

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We will go over this  
line by line  
in the following slides.

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## "I" STATEMENT PREP WORKSHEET

This worksheet can help me understand my own thoughts, feelings, patterns, needs and desires. Knowing myself can help me get ready to deal with any person, situation, belief, institution, etc. By identifying what is going on inside myself, I gain wisdom about what to do next; change something, accept what is, or both.

Read as a paragraph, it goes like this;

When \_\_\_ does or says \_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_ and I think \_\_\_, because \_\_\_ and because \_\_\_ .

I would prefer that \_\_\_; however, I accept that I am powerless over \_\_\_ .

To protect myself, I can \_\_\_ . To care for myself, I will \_\_\_ .

Higher power, please \_\_\_ .

I'll seek support by reaching out to, \_\_\_, \_\_\_, and \_\_\_ .

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## COMPLETING THE WORKSHEET TOGETHER

- Get ready to write!
- For this exercise, pick 1 scenario to process.
- Try not to overthink it: the truth will surface as we relax and allow it.
- We'll have 30 seconds to complete each line. Brevity is useful here.
- When the worksheet is complete, we'll have time for some to share what they wrote.
- Time has been set aside for Q&A at the end.

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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1) WHEN \_\_\_\_\_  
PERSON, SITUATION, BELIEF, INSTITUTION, ETC.

Some Examples:

- Family Member, Friend, Colleague
- Traffic, Weather, Holidays
- Inferiority, Grandiosity, Shame
- Company, Organization, Doctrine

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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## 2) DOES OR SAYS \_\_\_\_\_ NEUTRAL OBSERVATION

Suggested Guidelines:

- Report only what can be seen or heard, like a scientist might.
- Keep the focus narrow for now.
- Do not include what he/she/it/they feel, think or believe.

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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## 3) I FEEL \_\_\_\_\_ MY FEELING(S)

Some Examples:

- |             |               |             |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| • Angry     | • Afraid      | • Sad       |
| • Hurt      | • Helpless    | • Numb      |
| • Jealous   | • Hopeless    | • Ashamed   |
| • Irritable | • Overwhelmed | • Exhausted |
| • Sensitive | • Incompetent | • Apathetic |

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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4) I THINK \_\_\_\_\_  
MY THOUGHT(S)

The story that causes or explains the feeling(s).

- \_\_\_ should \_\_\_
- \_\_\_ shouldn't \_\_\_
- \_\_\_ always \_\_\_
- \_\_\_ never \_\_\_
- \_\_\_ need(s) to \_\_\_

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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5) BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_  
MY NEED(S) OR DESIRE(S)

Some Examples

- |            |                   |              |
|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| • Safety   | • Freedom         | • Connection |
| • Security | • Peace           | • Importance |
| • Trust    | • Autonomy        | • Acceptance |
| • Respect  | • Authenticity    | • Sex        |
| • Support  | • Self-expression | • Love       |

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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6) AND BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_  
MY PERSONAL PATTERN(S) OR CHARACTERISTIC(S)

Some Examples:

- Lack Self-awareness
- Lack Empathy
- Mask Pain
- Seek Approval
- Hide Mistakes
- Lie To Look Good
- Compromise Integrity
- Hypervigilance
- Self Silence / Filter
- Caretaking / Taking Over
- Give Unrequested Advice
- Blame / Shame
- Criticize / Judge
- Seek Distraction
- Maintain Distance
- Indirect / Evasive Communication
- Decline Using Recovery Tools

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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7) I WOULD PREFER THAT \_\_\_\_\_  
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Suggested Guidelines:

- Be clear, reasonable and realistic.
- Keep the focus narrow for now.
- This is a hopeful request, not a demand.

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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8) HOWEVER, I ACCEPT THAT I AM POWERLESS OVER \_\_\_\_\_  
PERSON, SITUATION, BELIEF, INSTITUTION, ETC.

Some Examples:

- Copy line 1
- Copy any line(s) 2 - 6
- The past
- My disease of codependency
- Everything except my choice right now

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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9) TO PROTECT MYSELF, I CAN \_\_\_\_\_  
MY BOUNDARY AND/OR RESPONSE

Some Examples:

- |                                     |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Maintain Self-care                | • Pray For Guidance |
| • Communicate Clearly               | • Support Myself    |
| • Avoid Harmful People / Situations | • Come Prepared     |
| • Trust My Gut, Heed Warning Signs  | • Lovingly Detach   |

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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**I 0) TO CARE FOR MYSELF, I WILL \_\_\_\_\_**  
**MY INTENDED FOLLOW THROUGH**

Some Examples:

- Prioritize Self-care
- Make Outreach Calls
- Pray & Meditate
- Say Affirmations
- Use Literature & Recordings
- Practice Acceptance
- Attend Meetings
- Keep Learning & Growing
- Be of Service
- Play & Have Fun

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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**I I) HIGHER POWER, \_\_\_\_\_**  
**PRAYER AND MEDITATION**

Some Examples:

- Serenity Prayer
- CoDA Third Step Prayer
- CoDA Recovery Prayer
- CoDA Making Choices Prayer
- Prayer from personal spiritual practice
- Improvise a prayer in the moment
- "Help!"
- "I'm listening."

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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## 12) I'LL SEEK SUPPORT BY REACHING OUT TO \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, AND \_\_\_\_ SPONSOR, MEETING, CODA FELLOW, ETC.

Suggested guidelines: Reach out to people who are:

- Trustworthy
- Available
- Compatible
- A Positive Influence
- Not Invested in the Outcome

**WRITE YOUR OWN: 30 seconds**

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## "I" STATEMENT PREP WORKSHEET RECAP AND SHARING

When \_\_\_\_ does or says \_\_\_\_ I feel \_\_\_\_ and I think \_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_ and because \_\_\_\_ .

I would prefer that \_\_\_\_; however, I accept that I am powerless over \_\_\_\_ .

To protect myself, \_\_\_\_ . To care for myself, I will \_\_\_\_ .

Higher power, please \_\_\_\_ .

I'll seek support by reaching out to \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_ .

**SHARING: 5 - 7 volunteers, up to 2 minutes each**

**Please read only what you have written.**

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## LITERATURE, TOOLS & RESOURCES

- Attending Meetings
- Experiences With Crosstalk
- Communication and Recovery
- Establishing Boundaries
- Twelve Piece Relationship Tool Kit
  - [www.corepublications.org](http://www.corepublications.org)
- Free pamphlets & more
  - [coda.org/meeting-materials/service-materials/](http://coda.org/meeting-materials/service-materials/)
- Meetings, meetings & more meetings
- Fellowship after meetings (even online)
- Sponsorship/Co-sponsorship
- Forum, Chat & more
  - [onlinecoda.net](http://onlinecoda.net)
- “I” Statement Prep Worksheet\*
- Email me: [carynAmessage@gmail.com](mailto:carynAmessage@gmail.com)

**FINAL Q&A UNTIL 12:12PM PT**

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# THANK YOU for being here!

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Higher Power, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference!

Keep coming back; it works if you work it and you're worth it!!!

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