



“I” statements vs. “You” statements

“YOU” statements are basically accusations.

Such as: You just walked off like you didn’t care!
 You didn’t clean up the bathroom.
 You lied to me!

Typical Responses to “You” statements:

DEFENSIVENESS
ANGER
ARGUMENT
DENIAL (OR OTHER DEFENSES)
SHUT DOWN, WITHDRAWAL

“I” statements describe your FEELINGS related to your partner’s actions.

Such as: I felt abandoned and hurt when you left yesterday because you didn’t say goodbye to me. I wish we’d always say goodbye and hug when you leave.

I felt disrespected and betrayed when you didn’t clean the bathroom because we agreed you’d do that. I wish I didn’t have to remind you about it.

When you told me (that), I felt really sad and hurt. After all, you admitted it was a lie. I want us to always be truthful with each other even if it’s hard.

Typical Responses to “I” statements:

EMPATHY
SYMPATHY
GUILT
SHAME
WISH TO MAKE IT RIGHT (apologetic)
DISCUSSION

In general, it’s hard to argue with how someone else feels*. We feel what we feel, and others can generally easily identify with painful feelings. Whereas, when you present accusations and “facts” the other can always dispute the facts and endlessly justify, rationalize, etc.

*If the other responds:

“But you shouldn’t feel that way!”

Respond: But I did, and still do.

Or-

How would YOU feel?

(then, at least you may start a *discussion about feelings*, rather than just argue over the facts).