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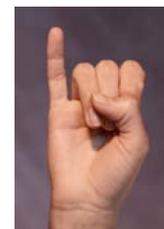
# Culture Change in Practice

## The "I" Statement



Tuesday, January 30, 2007

There is nearly no worse way to start off a conversation than pointing a finger at someone, literally or figuratively. You are almost always assured of soliciting a defensive act. (I'm talking about conflict here, not the sort of things that elicit blushing and "awe shucks.") Pardon my lapse into the corny, but when you point your finger at someone else, three fingers point back at you.



So, here we go with feedback that first takes responsibility for our own role in the situation. This will hopefully give us a better chance of asking someone to change his or her behavior.

What if I said to my husband, "You leave your shoes in the hallway for everybody to trip on and you make me so mad!" Now, chances are by leaving his shoes in the hall he was just being lazy and not doing it to get my goat or make me trip. When I give him the feedback above, I'm making him responsible for my anger. He didn't mean to and had no clue that it would make me angry.

And so instead, I say, "I get mad when you leave your shoes in the hallway because I trip on them. I'd appreciate it if you put them in the closet instead." By saying it this way I take responsibility for my feelings but also ask him to change a specific behavior. I need to let him know that leaving his shoes in the hall does make me mad so that hopefully he will not do it anymore.

The "I" statement (a special brand of constructive feedback) has four parts:

- A) "I feel \_\_\_\_" taking responsibility for your own feelings
  - B) "when you \_\_\_\_" stating the behavior that is a problem
  - C) "because \_\_\_\_" what it is about the behavior or its consequences that you object to
  - D) "I'd appreciate it if you would \_\_\_\_"
- Offer a preferred alternative to the behavior

That's it! There you go. One small word of warning: While this approach aims at not making the other person defensive, it can easily drift into condescending waters. Be watchful of your tone, holding close to sincerity.

posted by Steph Kilen at 9:17 AM



**"Culture Change in Practice" is our own weblog where people can become involved in a conversation about Culture Change as it is practiced by professionals in real nursing homes. Feel free to join the conversation, or post a comment about something you have learned on your journey.**

[www.culturechangenow.com/weblog.html](http://www.culturechangenow.com/weblog.html)