

4-H Grab and Go: "I" Statements

Concept:

Effective communication skills are important when dealing with tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.

Age/Grade Level:

Middle school: Ages 12-15

Education Standard:

National Health Education Standard 4: Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Life Skill:

Communication, Social Skills

Success Indicator:

Youth will demonstrate how to use "I" messages to refuse risky behaviors.

National 4-H Curriculum:**PREPARATION**

Time: 45 - 60 minutes

Space:

Large open classroom or outdoor space

Materials:

- Pencils/pens
- Paper

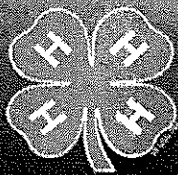
Background Information:

To avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications youth need to understand that communication is more than just an exchange of words. It is a process of sending information about ideas and feelings to one another. Messages are more than just speaking. The spoken word makes up only 7% of the message, while the remaining 93% of communication is facial expressions/body language (55%) and language and vocal tones (38%).

It is important to be familiar with all aspects of communication. Learning to use communication effectively helps teens be better prepared to refuse tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs when they encounter risky situations. Effective communication skills are necessary in all aspects of life.

Instructions:

1. Explain it is not only the words that are shared that are important, it is also the feelings. When you get into risky situations, you need to let others know how you feel and why. This is very difficult to do. One way to do this is by using "I" statements. "I" statements can be used when saying no. They tell others how you feel, the reason you feel that way, and what you plan to do. They allow *you* to accept the responsibility, whereas using "you" statements blames the other person.
2. There are four parts to an "I" statement:
 - A. I feel..... (explain feelings);
 - B. When you (explain behavior);
 - C. Because (explaining why you feel that way);
 - D. Could we (offer a solution or explain what you plan to do)
3. Have youth practice changing "you" statements to "I" statements. Example: You are so stupid to smoke weed. ("you" statement)
 - A. I am really worried (explains feelings)
 - B. when you smoke weed (explains behavior)



"I" Statements

Youth Development Tip:

Have several participants share different answers to the same statement. Point out each part of the "I" message after they read it. If a part is missing, use words such as "when you.....," or "because.....," or "could we" as questions to help them finish their "I" message.

Open Ended Questions:

- How do "I" messages feel different than "you" messages?
- Was this easy or hard? Why?
- What is the benefit of using "I" messages?

- C. because I learned it is much worse than smoking cigarettes. It messes up your brain permanently, it is illegal, and you could go to jail. (explains why you feel that way)
- D. Would you consider going with me to talk to someone about this? (offers a solution)

Use the following "I" statements as examples or develop your own.

- You shouldn't be driving when you are drinking.
- You are going to get caught smoking if you are not careful.
- You act really weird after you use an inhalant.
- You are always getting me into trouble when we go to a party where there is drinking.

Discuss their answers. Remind participants that there can be more than one answer but that all parts should be answered.

4. If there is enough time, have participants practice other "I" statements using ideas from their own life.
5. Review the **Open-Ended Questions**.

Learn More

The following websites provide additional information:

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/07104a-English.html>

<http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=CM109>