The I-statement *formula.*

Five small steps that turn a swirl of reactions into clear words — first for yourself, then for the people around you.

SOLA'S FIVE-STEP FORMULA

1 When I _____
SENSORY · WHAT I NOTICED
What I saw, heard, touched, smelled, tasted or felt in my body. Facts a camera could record — no judgments yet.

2 I think _____
THOUGHT · THE STORY
The meaning my brain made of it. A thought, not a fact — worth noticing, and holding lightly.

3 I feel _____
EMOTION · THE FEELING
One or two feeling words. Can't find one? Name where it sits in your body: "tight chest," "buzzy hands."

4 I want/need _____
NEED · WHAT WOULD HELP
The thing that would bring you back to steady. Specific and doable beats vague and huge.

5 I will _____
ACTION · MY NEXT STEP
Something within **your** control. It keeps you moving and never depends on someone else changing first.

WHY IT FITS NEURODIVERGENT BRAINS

Structure for the moments that feel messy

It starts with the senses. Many ND brains take in sensory input intensely. Naming it first explains the reaction — to you and to others.

It untangles the knot. Separating what happened, what I think and what I feel helps when emotions are hard to name or arrive all at once.

It says the need out loud. No hints, no guessing games. Clear words bridge the gap between different communication styles.

It ends in action, not blame. "I" instead of "you" lowers defensiveness, and a next step turns overwhelm into something you can do.

Continued on back →

ONE FORMULA, TWO DIRECTIONS

Sort it inside. *Say it outside.*

Inside: processing

Use it silently, in a journal or notes app, to slow a spiral down. You're just sorting the pieces — nobody else has to see it.

Good for: racing thoughts, shutdowns, figuring out why something bothered you.

EXAMPLE · IN MY JOURNAL

When I saw my text was read with no reply...

I think she might be upset with me.

I feel anxious — tight chest, can't focus.

I need reassurance, or to remember I don't know the whole story yet.

I will put my phone down, and check in gently tomorrow.

Outside: communicating

Once it's sorted, say it — out loud, in a text or on a card. The other person gets facts, feelings and a clear ask instead of a guess.

Good for: partners, family, roommates, coworkers, teachers.

EXAMPLE · SAID OUT LOUD

When I hear the TV and the dishwasher at the same time...

I think I won't be able to follow what you're saying.

I feel overwhelmed and a bit short-tempered.

I need one sound at a time while we talk.

I will turn the TV off — can we talk in five minutes?

Write it first
Texting or writing counts. Speaking isn't required.

Start small
Only "When I" and "I feel" today? That's progress.

Skip "you always"
Swap it for what your senses actually noticed.

Take your time
"Can I come back to this later?" is a full answer.

Try it now

Think of something from this week — big or small.

When I _____

I think _____

I feel _____

I want/need _____

I will _____

Is this one for **inside** (just for me) or **outside** (to share)? Circle one: Inside Outside