

Speaking from “I”

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I have thought a lot about speaking from ‘I’ and why that matters. Socially we only use I in the most intimate conversations or in surface exchanges, academically it is considered less scholarly if one speaks from I (unless studying feminist theory or a few others). Psychologically when speaking from ‘we’ or ‘you’ it is considered ‘not owning’ one’s own experience, blaming, or not taking personal responsibility. As I think about it, from my own experience – it goes a bit deeper than the sometimes irritating reminder, ‘could you say that using I?’

Speaking from I feels profound for me. I remember the first time I really felt what it felt like to speak from I...it was fortifying...more real-making for me. It was like some part of me got filled in. I felt it in my body...more solid, like I got collected up somehow.

It occurs to me that when I (we) see something in someone, or when I see a dynamic or pattern unfolding on the floor or in our human nature, the reason I even see it is because it resonates with me. It is resonant with me, therefore it is in me. As I speak about that observation or experience and claim it, make it about my experience, my awareness, my thoughts or ponderings, it is powerful for me and more authentic for the group I share it with. It is also more real, more revealing, more intimate...which sometimes feels more vulnerable.

When I hear people speak from ‘we’ it can feel like broad generalizations. Sometimes I feel like they don’t relate to me and this leads to some catching in me, like I don’t fit in, I’m excluded, or that I am separate from ‘everyone’ else’s experience. I imagine I am not alone in this experience. The other way I react to this is by blocking what is being said. Some resistance rises up in me and says, “don’t tell me what is true for me, don’t tell me what I feel or how I experience this!” I imagine I’m not alone in this. Ironically, what is being said, might be very relevant or important for me to hear.

I am giving extreme examples or speaking about subtle experience and feeling to make the point. When I speak from ‘I’ many things happen on many levels to empower me and to invite others into both what I am saying and into their own experience of power. I invite you to try it! Try only speaking from ‘I’ for 3 days and see what you notice and what happens! If you should choose to accept this mission...I can’t wait to hear about your experience!