



# What not to say and why

*Better than a thousand hollow words  
is one word that brings peace.*

Buddha

Despite all your promises to yourself that you will be calm, practical and objective during your mediation, much of how you react is down to your emotions. How you feel about your situation can result from many impressions you have about your situation, injustice, shame, vengeance grief, anger at unfair financial costs, your friends and relatives feelings and so on. Emotional reactions are generally unproductive. Once you are aware of this you can be in control of your own emotions and to some extent influence the emotional reaction of your ex. You can do this by watching your language. Watching your language makes you measured and reflective and is less likely to invoke an emotional reaction in your ex.

There is nothing worse than the ill thought through dismissive comment to close down what was a fruitful line of discussion. Although you are best placed to know the issues that will enrage your ex and which are best treated with care or avoided, here are a few one liners that certainly will not help.

If you say ...	Your ex might feel ...	Try saying ...	Why?
<i>That makes no sense</i>	Put down, dismissed, of no value.	<i>I don't understand or this does not make sense to me.</i>	Gives your ex another chance to clarify.
<i>I told you so</i>	Stupid ashamed.	<i>Nothing</i>	You are allowing your ex to save face.
<i>It doesn't matter</i>	Of no value, put down, frustrated.	<i>Let me start again/ Let me explain</i>	It shows you respect their opinions
<i>You're not listening</i>	Ignored, demeaned.	<i>I don't feel that I'm getting my point across to you.</i>	Oh yes they are! You just don't agree with their replies.
<i>It's your fault because ...</i>	Blamed, judged, shamed, alone.	<i>Nothing.</i>	Most people are usually harshly self critical, they don't need your help.
<i>You made me feel...</i>	Misjudged, angry, wrongly blamed.	<i>I'm starting to feel...</i>	You need to take responsibility for your own feelings
<i>Anyone can see that ... or ...Obviously</i>	Stupid, inadequate.	<i>Avoid at all costs</i>	It is more compassionate and respectful.
<i>Everyone else thinks, says or does</i>	Bullied, coerced, compared.	<i>I think ... I said ... I did...</i>	You are owning your own opinions, views or actions.
<i>Whatever!</i>	Dismissed, resentful.	<i>Nothing</i>	An unnecessary put down.

<b>If you say ...</b>	<b>Your ex might feel ...</b>	<b>Try saying ...</b>	<b>Why?</b>
<i>Year right!</i>	Disbelieved, belittled, untrustworthy.	<i>Nothing</i>	It is aggressive and demeaning.
<i>If you hadn't done X, I wouldn't have done Y</i>	Blamed, accused, ashamed defensive.	<i>Let's see if we can get it right this time.</i>	Time to put the past behind you.
<i>You should, or shouldn't have ...</i>	Accused, resentful, defensive, misjudged.	<i>What can we do to make it different this time?</i>	As above.
<i>You better .... You should ...</i>	Demeaned, bullied, resentful, bitter, hurt, stupid.	<i>Thanks for ... but next time could you ...</i>	Putting a positive spin on the mistakes of others does not shut down communication.
<i>... agrees with me.</i>	Bullied, judged, exposed.	<i>Nothing.</i>	In this moment the focus is on the two of you and your child, keep it that way.
<i>That's not what ___ says"</i> <i>That's not how ___ does it"</i> <i>(comparison)</i>	Found wanting, insignificant, judged, misrepresented, vulnerable, compared unfavourably.	<i>What else could we say?</i> <i>Are there other ways we could do it?</i>	You need to build trust before introducing external solutions. Introducing them too early may cause tension.
<i>So I left the washing up, I didn't complain when you were late home</i>	Like it's ground hog day all over again.	<i>Sorry I forgot all about the washing up that time.</i> <i>Ask the question about arriving home later... if you have to bring it up.</i>	You are taking responsibility for your actions and not drawing on past errors to make yourself feel better.
<i>I don't have time for this.</i>	Dismissed, demeaned, of no value.	<i>I would love to talk further but we only have an hour. Can we talk next time we meet?</i>	You are showing respect for your ex by acknowledging their need to talk something through.
<i>You said ...</i>	Misquoted, misrepresented.	<i>As far as I can remember you said.... am I right?</i>	You are checking your memory of events, not imposing your version on your ex.
<i>You're always late or You never listen</i>	Misrepresented, blamed, accused.	<i>Lets both try and be on time today</i> <i>It would be better if we both listened better to each other</i>	You are not exaggerating past events and you are including your self in the solution.

## **To make sure your words have maximum effect try the following**

### **Be aware of your tone**

Not condescending, indifferent, distant, patronising , etc. Try to be upbeat without sounding crazy.

### **Be aware of your volume**

Speak quietly – it keeps you calm when being provoked. Getting louder is a sure sign you are losing it.

### **Be aware of your cadence**

The rate or rhythm of speech – speaking fast means you're not taking care with what you say, speaking slowly sounds more authoritative and gives you time to think.

### **Watch your frequency**

Keeping your voice low keeps you calm specially when you are speaking slowly. A raised frequency is usually accompanied by talking faster and increased heart rate.

### **Do not interrupt**

It will only encourage your ex to do the same.

### **Wait a moment before you reply**

It helps to keep the atmosphere calm.

