

Say What You Need to Say, Not What You Think We Need to Hear

How to engage in a conversation (especially with someone who has an illness) that is sincere, vulnerable, maybe even intimate. It's really the words that count.

January 30, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

A well placed

space

expands the boundaries of the sentence to occupy a region beyond its designated property lines. The sentences can always buy more with the currency of mechanics

em dashes

and semicolons;

colons;

commas,

with

coordinating conjunctions, of course.

Parentheticals even,

my god!

Even the ellipse may trick you into reading two sentences... as one,

but look,

when it comes to spaces

mechanicspunctuationparentheticalssemicolonscommasanddashes

may take up room, but they can never afford the real estate of

a well placed

space

But, sentences do have one up on a well placed space. A space can slow you down or speedyouup. Make you pause. Make you think. Make you embarrassed for the writer who placed too many spaces after a period. But they were taught to type when that was the standard so don't hate on them.

Courtesy of Adam Hayden/@glioblastology

Spaces can do so many things, but it's really the words that count.

We use our words to write our status updates, our blogs, or our Caring Bridge © posts. We use our words to celebrate a canceversary, or a craniversary, or to dread the next MRI with scanxiety—three words that people with cancer made up. I love that we use our words to make up new words! Like glioblastology—a word that a person with cancer made up.

Our words are rarely the right thing to say. They are always the right thing to say, so we think.

Thoughts & Prayers

You'll be the miracle.

We're praying for you.

God's not done with you yet.

This is part of a larger plan.

Everything happens for a reason.

God won't give you more than you can handle.

Your kids will be stronger for facing adversity.

Y'all need to take a well placed

space.

It really is the words that count when you say the words that you mean to say,

want to say,

need to say,

and not the words that you think we need to hear. Never say words that you think other people need you to say. This is a rule that you can fold up, place in your pocket, and carry around.

You are always wrong to say the words that you think others need you to say.

On the other side of the paper, write:

You are always right to say the words that you need to say.

98.4% of the garbage that falls out of people's mouths, we say because we think others need us to say it; that they need to hear it, to comfort them with our brand of comfort or to correct them with our brand of correctness.

When we speak the words that we need to say, we're not using our words against the listener, "I'm sorry, it's tough love. They needed to hear it." No, no, no, when we speak the words that we need to say. We center our words on, for, and by us. Because when we say what we need to say, we display our comfort, trust, and security in ourselves and what we have to say. When we say what we need to say, we are authentic.

Our interlocutor; our conversation partner is then invited to show up with their full selves intact to speak the words that they need to say, for themselves. When we each hold ourselves accountable to speaking the words that we need to say, we engage in a conversation that is sincere, vulnerable, maybe even intimate. Intimacy is good. See how it starts with trust in yourself? You can never find intimacy in things other people need. Intimacy begins with what you need, and mysteriously perhaps, or serendipitously, people who know what they need give themselves to others, and we blossom. We trust each other to express what we need, spoken because we need to say it. Intimacy is the trust to say what we need.

When we speak the words that we think other people need to hear, well, that means our words get their meaning from things that others have to produce. We become coercive. Dominant. Like a proselytizer. You fool yourself into speaking like others need to hear what you've got to say.

You begin taking up too much space.

Hush.

We blog, we status update, we thread, tweet, post, publish

(especially in illness) because we get to say the things that we need to say, without having to put up with what everyone else thinks we need to hear. This does not mean that if you have something helpful to offer, something to suggest, some coaching to provide, a little gentle correction, terrific! Share it! My only ask is that you share that because you need to say it, not because I need to hear it.

"Hey Adam, did you see this study? Have you looked into trials, have you brought it up with your doctor? I think you need to really stay up on these things! Is your doctor telling you about trials?"

Ah, yes, telling me what you think I need to hear.

"Hey, Adam, I saw this cool study that I wanted to share with you. I've found that it's really helpful for me to feel a part of your illness, to feel a little less helpless, if I can sometimes share articles and things I find. I was excited to see this, and it makes me feel good to pass it along. Thanks for accepting this and understanding I need to share these things to feel more connected to you."

A breath of fresh air, yes?

I love observing the movement of text on a page. And I really love the greedy sentences envious of space's impactful concision spending their currency on a colon to keep the thought going.

Spaces do so much with such silence. I can't leave my words out of anything!

I'll keep writing (and you should, too). It's really the words that count—not for what anyone else wants or needs to hear, but for what you need to say. What we need to say.

This blog is always at its best when I say whatever I need to. I didn't even know what I'd say tonight—I guess appropriate then that in my absence of ideas, I wrote words. It's really the words that count.

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<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/say-need-say-think-need-hear>