

WORDS EVERY CAREGIVER SHOULD AVOID

We all have times when we say things that really are not very helpful. There are some words that can come back and haunt you – or raise your stress level unnecessarily. For your own sake, try eliminating the following knee-jerk expressions from your vocabulary. Words really do have power.

ABSOLUTES (Always, Never)

Words like always and never are dangerous, especially with regard to caregiving. Beware falling into absolutes: “I promised Mom we’d NEVER put her in a nursing home.” “I’m sorry I can’t go to lunch, because I ALWAYS feed Sam myself.” Life, and especially caregiving, is full of shades of gray. Situations change. Your health matters. You just can’t know what’s coming, so protect yourself by staying flexible and open to help and change in any form.

SHOULDA, COULDA, WOULD, OUGHTTA

These words are infamous guilt-builders. By dwelling on what you should have done, might have done otherwise, or ought to do, you heap expectations on yourself. You also risk ruminating on things that are over and done with and can’t really be changed. The shoulda-couldas stir up unproductive feelings and don’t help you move on to whatever the current reality may be.

I don’t mind (when really you do)

Caregivers are known for their big hearts and accommodating natures. The trouble is, this tendency can lead to taking on more and more when you really *just can’t*. Practice saying “no” when you just can’t do it, and each subsequent time will be a little easier.

If Only

“If only I had more time to talk to the doctors...if only mom would eat...if only someone had been with dad when he fell...if only we’d tried a different medicine...” Every setback and decline can cause a concerned caregiver to replay all the steps and choices leading up to it. The problem is that what’s done is done, and you can only move forward from here. Don’t beat yourself up - things very well might have turned out no differently anyway.

The right thing to do

There’s a myth in caregiving that there’s a “right” way to do everything. In fact, there’s only what’s right for you, right for your loved one, right on this day, right in your family, right with these other health conditions, right given your resources and abilities. In other words, there’s no nirvana-based “right” way to care for someone with dementia or other conditions. Better: “the best I can. The best I know how.”

Taken from Paula Spencer Scott, Caring.com senior editor. Caring.com may be a site you want to check out. It has some very good articles on caregiving.