

# AI-01070 Unhelpful Phrases

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The following are considered unhelpful phrases. Explain more and unpack

1. "I'm just being honest": Often used to mask criticism.
2. "You look great for your age": Implies age is a negative factor.
3. "At least you tried": Can come off as condescending.
4. "Everything happens for a reason": Dismisses the person's feelings.
5. "You're so brave": Can imply pity rather than admiration.
6. "It could be worse": Minimizes the person's experience.
7. "I'm sure it will all work out": Can feel dismissive of current struggles.
8. "You're too sensitive": Invalidates the person's emotions.

## Unhelpful Phrases Explained:

Here's a breakdown of why these phrases can be unhelpful, with two examples each:

### 1. "I'm just being honest": Often used to mask criticism.

This phrase can shut down conversation and make criticism feel harsh. It focuses on the delivery rather than the content.

- **Example 1:** Person A: "I didn't like your presentation. It felt rushed." Person B: "I'm just being honest, it wasn't that good." (This is blunt and shuts down a chance to offer constructive feedback.)
- **Example 2:** Person A: "I'm worried about my weight gain." Person B: "I'm just being honest, you have put on a few pounds." (This focuses on negativity and doesn't offer support.)

## 2. **"You look great for your age": Implies age is a negative factor.**

This backhanded compliment suggests that looking good is unexpected at an older age.

- **Example 1:** Colleague: "Wow, you look great for your age!" Response: "Thanks, but wouldn't it be better to just say I look great?" (Highlights the awkwardness of the phrase.)
- **Example 2:** Grandmother: "You look so youthful, you don't look a day over 50!" (This unintentionally implies she shouldn't look good at her actual age.)

## 3. **"At least you tried": Can come off as condescending.**

This phrase diminishes the effort someone put in, even if the outcome wasn't ideal.

- **Example 1:** Child fails a test: "At least you tried studying for it." (This dismisses the disappointment of failing.)
- **Example 2:** Co-worker's project gets rejected: "At least you tried a new approach." (This minimizes the frustration of a rejected project.)

We'll continue unpacking the remaining phrases in the next response to avoid overloading you with information.

## 4. **"Everything happens for a reason": Dismisses the person's feelings.**

This phrase offers little comfort and can feel dismissive of someone's current pain or hardship.

- **Example 1:** Friend loses a loved one: "Everything happens for a reason, they're in a better place now." (This ignores the friend's grief.)
- **Example 2:** Employee gets laid off: "Don't worry, everything happens for a reason, you'll find something better." (This minimizes the stress of job loss.)

## 5. **"You're so brave": Can imply pity rather than admiration.**

While trying to be supportive, this phrase can downplay the difficulty of the situation.

- **Example 1:** Person going through a difficult treatment: "You're so brave for going through this." (This can feel patronizing.)
- **Example 2:** Someone speaking up about abuse: "You're so brave to come forward." (This might downplay the fear associated with speaking up.)

**6. "It could be worse": Minimizes the person's experience.**

This phrase invalidates their feelings by implying their situation isn't that bad.

- **Example 1:** Feeling overwhelmed at work: "It could be worse, at least you have a job." (This dismisses the current stress.)
- **Example 2:** Going through a breakup: "It could be worse, at least you weren't married." (This minimizes the emotional pain of a breakup.)

**7. "I'm sure it will all work out": Can feel dismissive of current struggles.**

This phrase offers empty platitudes and doesn't acknowledge the current difficulty.

- **Example 1:** Facing financial hardship: "Don't worry, I'm sure it will all work out in the end." (This ignores the immediate worry.)
- **Example 2:** Student struggling in a class: "Just keep at it, I'm sure you'll pass." (This dismisses the current struggle with the course.)

**8. "You're too sensitive": Invalidates the person's emotions.**

This phrase makes the person feel wrong for having normal emotions.

- **Example 1:** Feeling hurt by someone's words: "You're too sensitive, they didn't mean it that way." (This invalidates the person's feelings.)
- **Example 2:** Crying during a sad movie: "Don't be so sensitive, it's just a movie." (This dismisses the emotional impact of the film.)

**Alfred Adler made out a rule which says "Don't praise or avoid making any praise", it the essence of why he said that carries the same tone as the concept we are discussing?**

No, Alfred Adler's concept regarding praise is actually quite different from the unhelpful phrases we discussed. Here's why:

- **Unhelpful phrases** tend to be dismissive, condescending, or focus on negativity. They can make the other person feel bad or unheard.
- **Adler's view on praise** likely focused on the **type** of praise, not avoiding it altogether. He believed people strive for competence and a sense of belonging.

Here's a more nuanced understanding of Adler's perspective:

- **Empty praise** that inflates egos without recognizing genuine effort isn't helpful. Phrases like "You're so smart!" all the time wouldn't be something Adler necessarily advocated for.
- **Focusing on effort and progress** is likely what Adler valued in praise. Recognizing someone's hard work and improvement over simply saying they're "good" at something aligns more with his ideas.

Adler's concept emphasizes meaningful encouragement that motivates and acknowledges a person's journey, unlike the dismissive nature of the unhelpful phrases we discussed earlier.

**What I meant is the inverse of what Alfred Adler meant when he said zero praise.**

You're right, there seems to be some confusion about Adler's view on praise.

Adler never actually advocated for "zero praise." It's more likely there was a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of his ideas.

Here's a clearer explanation:

- **Adler emphasized the importance of meaningful encouragement over empty praise.** Empty praise focuses on inherent traits ("You're so talented!") while encouragement acknowledges effort and progress ("I see how hard you worked on that!").
- **His concern might have been with the potential downsides of excessive praise.** Overreliance on praise for motivation or self-worth can be detrimental.

While the unhelpful phrases we discussed share a dismissive quality, they differ from Adler's perspective in a few ways:

- **Unhelpful phrases** are often blunt and lack empathy.

- **Adler's approach** focused on replacing empty praise with a more constructive form of encouragement.

So, while there might be a superficial similarity of avoiding praise in some interpretations, Adler's concept goes deeper. It's about offering recognition that fosters a growth mindset and intrinsic motivation, which aligns more with the opposite of the unhelpful phrases we discussed earlier.