**22 Respectful Ways to Respond When Someone Uses the R-Word**

How many of us have been in a conversation with someone — a friend or coworker, perhaps, or a new acquaintance — and he or she casually uses the R-word in a derogatory way? It can be a difficult situation to navigate, especially with someone you’re not totally comfortable with. What’s the best way to express how problematic and hurtful that word can be?

We teamed up with [Spread the Word to End the Word](http://www.r-word.org/) to ask our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EndtheWord/photos/a.290132966156.154001.60375161156/10153168199286157/?type=1&theater) [communities](https://www.facebook.com/Themightysite/posts/581772611970490) how they respond (respectfully) when that happens. These are just some of the great suggestions we received:

**1.**“Do you think you could use a different word? It’s hurtful to people I love dearly.” — Barb Weber Eltz

**2.**“You know, that’s really not a respectful word, and it’s not in my vocabulary because it’s very hurtful. I would kindly appreciate it if you wouldn’t use that word.” — Jennifer Colligan-Trevett

**3.**“Please don’t use that word. I find it very offensive.” — Rachie Firkin

**4.**“I need you to know it breaks my heart when you say that. You are belittling someone I love every time you use the word.” — Cassie Mareesie

**5.**“Using that word, in that way, can be hurtful to others. You are kind and creative. Can you find a word that more accurately says what you want but isn’t hurtful?” — Maureen Geurin

**6.**“You never know how a word like that is going to hit somebody. You never know who has a kid or a sibling or a friend who has that word lobbed at them in the ugliest way. It’s just better not to say it.” — Tiffany Howard

**7.**“Excuse me, but I’d like to ask you to refrain from saying that word. It certainly does not apply in the situation you are using it. If you are willing, I’d like to share with you how it has progressed from a medical term into the vile, hateful way it is used far too often now. At the least consider what you said and why.” — Rob Rau

**8.**“Can you please choose another word? I have a child with Down syndrome, and that word is not respectful of him.” — Julie Gerhart Rothholz

**9.**“It’s really important to be careful about the words we choose to use. In my head, I know you aren’t using that word to hurt me, but that doesn’t change the fact that, in my heart, it does. It would mean a lot to me if you could find different words to express what you are trying to say.” — Gabrielle Leah

**10.**“There are so many other words in our vocabulary that can be used. There is really no need to use the R-word.” — Sandi Eaglin Cooke

**11.**“Using that word is a sign of ignorance, and I know you are a well-educated person.” — Jennifer Harris

**12.**“Please don’t use that word. Have you tried saying ‘ridiculous’ instead?” — Shari J Gary

**13.**“Did you know I have a sister with special needs? She’s incredible and lights up my life!” — Alexis McCracken

**14.**“”You may not realize it, but that is no longer a socially acceptable word.”” – Cindy Colwell

**15.**“I’m autistic, [and] I ask that you don’t use that word around me please. Thank you.” — Arianna Lea Nyswonger

**16.**“Goodness, we need to find you a better word!” — Barbara Gracey

**17.**“Hey, that’s not cool.” — Trista McDermott

**18.**“You may not be aware, but there’s this campaign [called] Spread the Word to End the Word, and I signed the pledge.” — Dawne Trombi Benoit

**19.**“Were you aware that many people, including me, find that word offensive and inappropriate?” — Kristin Link

**20.**“Please don’t use that word in my presence. Many things I can deal with. Unfortunately, this one I find offensive. Please and thank you.” — Shawn Baltz

**21.**“That’s really not a nice word to use.” — Laura Steenerson

**22.**“Excuse me there, buddy, I couldn’t help overhear just now… you misused a word I don’t think you understand the meaning to, and unfortunately it is such an offensive and derogatory word that most people out of shock shy away and lose the courage to correct your use. You see, out of fear, years ago, some people used that word to classify those ‘other’ people who made them feel uncomfortable. To mark them as being less than. These ‘other’ people are our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, our loved ones, and our friends.

“Since I know you wouldn’t stand for me calling the people in your life “less than,” how about we leave that word in the history books where it belongs, huh? Otherwise every time you use it, you’ll be proving that you in fact are less than. And to me, you seem like a good person. What do you say? No more R-word?” — Jim Mallon