



Alison Walker photo

This circa 1900 photo shows Wilf Bessey out front of Co-operative Feed Mill at 43 Guelph Street in Georgetown. The site was subsequently the office of The Georgetown Herald until 1992, and the current tenants are shown on the right. Courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills and the Esqueusing Historical Society.

OPINION

# TRY AVOIDING THESE PLATITUDES

**WHILE NOT MEANT TO, FREQUENTLY USED SAYINGS CAN END UP DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD, WRITES MELANIE MCGREGOR**



**MELANIE MCGREGOR**  
Column

well — have probably said these same things to others.

When people share personal struggles, we probably want to help but may not know what to say. So, we pull out one of these familiar reassurances and hope it does the job. Our hearts may be in the right place, but this kind of glib statement can actually backfire and be interpreted

as us not wanting to listen or not caring about others' feelings.

Chances are, nobody sets out to be dismissive or critical. But, think about the possible unintended messages behind these commonly used sayings and pieces of advice:

- "Every cloud has a silver lining." While we often look back at difficult experiences and see what we've learned, this comes after the fact rather than in the middle of the struggles. We need to talk about and work through the tough stuff before we can think

about what may make things better. It's not always easy, but listening to others' feelings without judgment is the best way to help them do that.

- "Just don't think about it." Easier said than done. Feeling like we can't talk about what's on our minds can make us think about it more. Talking about what we're feeling and thinking can bring some perspective and relief, so it's better to ask something like "What do you think would help?" or just listen and let go of the desire to fix the problem.

- "I understand how you feel." On the surface, this may sound like a good way to connect, but it can instead come across as dismissive and presumptuous. We can hear what others are saying and try to understand, but we can't fully grasp someone else's unique feelings and experiences, and saying that we do can shut down a conversation. Something like "I hear you" or "You're feeling overwhelmed" is a better way to go.

- "It could be worse," often followed by an example of someone who has it worse. Sure, it could be, but knowing that doesn't necessarily make a present situation feel less difficult or unpleasant. It may actually shut down conversation by suggest-

ing we are judging others' feelings as inappropriate and not worthy of discussion. Try to hear their perspective on their situation — which is always valid — rather than comparing it to other possibilities.

While it may indeed be darkest before the dawn, talking about and not dismissing the dark will help work toward the dawn.

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