

Union of Saints, Words Like “Ick.”

Words like “ick” may seem harmless or casual, but they often carry subtle psychological weight. They can create **barriers** between people because they function as **dismissive shorthand**—a way of rejecting, criticizing, or distancing without engaging in deeper dialogue. Here’s why they can be harmful:

1. Instant judgment without explanation

- Saying “ick” communicates disgust or aversion, but without context. The other person is left guessing what caused the reaction, which can feel unfair or shaming.

2. Triggers insecurity

- The sound and meaning of “ick” taps into primal feelings of being unwanted or rejected. Even when used jokingly, it can stir vulnerability and defensiveness.

3. Breaks connection instead of building it

- Strong, dismissive words create emotional distance. Instead of inviting curiosity (“Why do you feel that way?”), it shuts down conversation and openness.

4. Creates power imbalance

- A word like “ick” is quick, final, and hard to argue against. It gives the speaker the upper hand, making the listener feel small, embarrassed, or disregarded.

5. Reinforces social divides

- In groups, these kinds of words can become labels or tools of exclusion. Someone dismissed as “icky” can be pushed out socially without fair consideration.



Alternative approach: Instead of “ick,” people can use language that acknowledges their feelings while keeping space for connection. For example:

- “That makes me uncomfortable.”
- “I don’t think that’s for me.”
- “I feel unsure about this.”

These statements explain a boundary without cutting someone off emotionally.

1.

Name the dismissal

By calmly pointing it out, you break the spell of the word.

- “That’s a pretty dismissive word—what do you mean by it?”

This forces them to explain themselves instead of leaving you in a powerless position.

2.

Reframe with authority

Take control of the tone by flipping the dynamic.

- “Interesting reaction. I’d like to hear your reasoning.”
- “That tells me more about your perspective than about me.”

This shows you’re steady, not shaken.

3.

Shift to curiosity

Instead of defending, move the focus back on them.

- “What about it feels like an ‘ick’ to you?”

This not only regains control, but can subtly expose that their comment was shallow.

4.

Use humor as a shield

Humor can deflate their power grab without escalating.

- “Ick? That’s your big critique? I was expecting at least a full sentence.”

Light humor reframes the energy and keeps you above the jab.

5.

Stand firm with self-definition

When someone tries to define you with “ick,” redefine yourself in the moment.

- “I’m comfortable with who I am—if that feels like an ‘ick’ to you, that’s yours to carry.”

This reestablishes your power and shows boundaries.



Principle to remember:

Power comes from not letting their word dictate your emotional state. The more calm, curious, or confident you remain, the more you flip the dynamic—suddenly, they’re the one scrambling to justify their dismissal.