

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

You are listening to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast, Episode #73. If you want to change your life, the words you use matter. Let me help you choose them.

Welcome to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. If you're balancing career, family, wellness, and some days sanity, you are in the right place. This is where high-achieving, busy, working moms get the tools they need to eat, move, and think. I'm your host, physician, personal trainer, and Certified Life Coach, Carrie Holland. Let's do this.

Hey, how are you? What's new? What's good? So, what's good here, for starters, I'm almost to 75 episodes, and I'm pretty pumped about that. It is for sure been a lot of work, but also a lot of fun bringing you content week to week.

When I started this podcast, my goal was to give you as many resources and ideas as I could come up with to help you take better care of both your mind and your body through eating, moving, and of course thinking. I hope I've delivered on that.

But what's even cooler, is that you've given me a number of suggestions and requests for topics to be covered, like managing overdrinking, hormones, sugar cravings, navigating career change, and loads more. So, I have a running list of ideas thanks to you, and I will keep plugging away addressing your questions.

For those of you who have emailed, or found me on Facebook or Instagram or LinkedIn, and have sent me questions or comments, thanks. Please, keep them coming. I really love hearing from you. You can always email me at Carrie@carriehollandmd.com with your questions and suggestions, and I will respond to them.

Last, I'm asking for your help. If you haven't yet, please take a minute to leave me a review on Apple Podcasts. Your written reviews help get the podcast in front of more people who could benefit from these tools. I would

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

love to get to at least 150 reviews before the end of this year, that's my goal, but I need your help.

So, if you like what you're hearing, please write a short review to tell me what you think. That would be awesome. In the meantime, I will keep bringing you tools and ideas to consider week to week.

My suggestion to you is, as you listen to these episodes, take what speaks to you and leave the rest. Some of you are here because you want to lose weight. Some of you are here because you need help establishing and sticking to habits, like exercise. Some of you are here because you've worked really hard for a career, at the expense of taking care of yourself. Some of you are here because you feel stuck in any one of your work, body, fitness, or relationships.

Wherever it is in your life that you don't feel at your best, my goal is to help you change that, to optimize it. So, today, what I want to help you do is optimize your words. We are going to talk about your words today. How you talk.

What I mean by this, is I'm going to help you see how the words you choose, when you're talking about yourself, they matter. They matter a lot. I said it before, I will say it again here, but one of the reasons I love coaching is that I get to listen to your words, and then reflect them back to you and ask questions about them.

Your words, your language, and your sentences are the only representation I have of what is going on in your brain. Hearing those words, to me, is essential. So, as your coach, I listen to your words very carefully. The words you share with me reflect your beliefs and your truth.

It may be no big deal to you. Your words are just words, right? But for me, as your coach, that's where I can help you. Because your words give me access to your very powerful brain. What may be just words to you, to me, they are a window into what you believe about yourself, and what you believe about the world around you. That's where I get to help you.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

So, here's the crazy and the cool thing about your words. Think about it, the language you use, and the words you use to articulate your thoughts, they reflect how your brain is working and how you perceive your world. But your words don't just tell me how your brain is working, they also tell me how you are shaping your brain, and in turn shaping your world. It goes in a circle, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Your words tell me how you're seeing the world, and they also tell me how you're creating your world. It's really fascinating. Because remember, what you believe, you will go and find evidence to prove correct. So, if you tell me that you're too busy to exercise, first, that tells me how your brain is working. It tells me that your brain has decided you are too busy, and you believe 'too busy' is the truth about your life.

It also tells me how you are shaping your brain. Because once you decide you're too busy, you then go and find all the reasons in your life that you're too busy to exercise. Things like, your early morning start time, or when your kids have to leave for school, or what your dog walking schedule is like. Your words reflect your beliefs, but your words also shape your beliefs.

So, let me give you another example. This came up just last week during a coaching session. I have a client who has two young children, she works full time and she works really hard. Her husband travels fairly regularly for work, and during our session, she said a number of things that stuck out to me.

First, she said, "I feel like a chicken with my head cut off, when he travels." Then, a little later, she said, "It's always going to be crazy when you have kids screaming at you." Then she described her eating, while her husband was gone, as survival mode.

I found her word choice striking: Chicken with my head cut off. Crazy. Survival mode. That's how she's describing her weeks. To her, it was just words, it was her truth. But I was able to point out how she was choosing to describe her week, and see the effect that it was having on her. As you can

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

guess, she was proving herself right. She was running around like a chicken with her head cut off.

The point here is not at all to deny her experience, in fact, it's exactly the opposite. I wanted to know what her experience was when she's solo parenting, and I got it in her exact words. Part of my job is to help her acknowledge and name what it is that she's feeling. I want her to be able to name it and drop into it, and own what she's feeling about her experience. That's what we do. My job isn't to take that away.

So, we acknowledged that this is what it feels like in that moment for her. This is what she was feeling when she was solo parenting two small children and balancing work full time, we don't judge it. But then, once we do that, once we acknowledge what feels true and real, the next thing to consider is this.

What result does thinking that way produce in your life? When you decide that you're like a chicken with your head cut off when you're solo parenting, what happens? What happens is you go and make it true.

You feel disorganized and scattered, and have a hard time focusing on any one thing. You don't give yourself time to take care of your mind or your body because you're too busy running around. You feel tired and unfulfilled. You haven't taken care of yourself.

Or what happens, when you decide that your nutrition goes into survival mode when you're solo parenting? You make it true. You don't give yourself time to grocery shop or meal prep or pack meals for work. You eat meals that are off plan and you scrape by. You create evidence that you're in survival mode.

Remember, what comes out of your mouth, comes into your life. When you decide that you're going to be a chicken with your head cut off, that's what your week will be and you'll prove yourself right. When you decide that you're going into survival mode, you'll find the evidence to prove yourself correct.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

But what I want to point out, is that this may feel real and true to you. It may feel like the absolute truth that your weeks are that busy and scattered. It may feel like there is no other alternative, this is just the way it is. Like you're reporting the news. It feels like fact.

I would simply point out that while it feels like absolute fact to you, it's only the truth because you've made it your truth. You've made it your truth through your thoughts. With time and practice, those thoughts became your beliefs. Those beliefs become your filter for your world.

Your beliefs shape your world, and it comes out in the form of your sentences. It's really interesting to me how this works. But I've seen it over and over again in my clients, and even in myself. The words we use reveal our beliefs, and they also create our beliefs.

So, that was just one example. But what I really want to zone in on today, are two phrases that come up repeatedly during my client calls. Again, while these phrases may at first seem like no big deal, I'm going to make them a big deal today because using them is keeping you stuck. Then I'm going to give you an alternative. All right?

The first phrase I hear often is, "I can't. I can't lose weight. I can't get up early to exercise. I can't run. I can't change my career, my schedule, my nutrition, my relationship, my whatever," fill in the blank. So, I'm going to go ahead and take a big, bold leap here and encourage you to remove 'I can't' from your vocabulary when you're talking about changing your life. Okay?

You can just remove that from your brain all together. 'I can't' is a very disempowering place to be. I know it's only two words, but think about what saying 'I can't' implies. 'I can't' shuts the door on a different outcome. It creates a barrier. The worst thing about that barrier is it's self-created.

As an example, this one comes up all the time, when you decide 'I can't say no to dessert,' think about that. Think about what you're saying about yourself when you declare you can't say no to dessert. You've decided

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

ahead of time that when it comes to dessert, there's no way you can pass it up. There's your belief, there's your filter.

So, it makes total sense that when you're presented with a piece of chocolate cake to share with the table after your dinner out, of course you have some. You've used 'I can't say no to dessert' as your truth, and that's your filter. Then you go and have the dessert to prove that belief about yourself.

In turn, you've shaped your reality to be a world where you don't say no to dessert. It goes both ways. You've shaped your brain and your world, so that saying no to dessert is impossible.

Here's the other thing about declaring 'I can't.' Let me give you another example. When you tell me, "I can't get up early to exercise," this is another example that comes up all the time, you're blocking yourself from your own wisdom.

Deciding that you can't be a morning exerciser keeps you from looking for solutions. It keeps you from getting creative and looking for alternatives. It keeps you from looking for what is possible. It keeps you from setting an alarm and doing a 20-minute bodyweight routine before you get ready for work. It keeps you from going to bed just a little earlier at night so you can get up a little earlier. It keeps you from trying new, different, potentially hard things. But that's where all the growth is.

When you declare 'I can't,' you're stopping the process before you even get started. Saying 'I can't' undermines your belief in yourself. It runs directly counter to self-efficacy. And if you've been here at all listening to this podcast, you know how I feel about self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy, very simply, is your belief in your ability to do what you set out to do. It's your confidence and your ability to control your motivation and behavior. So, when you believe 'I can't change my schedule to make time for myself,' you're essentially deciding that you don't have the ability to

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

have the conversations, make the requests, and follow through in order to create a different schedule for yourself. You're selling yourself short.

The other side effect of deciding 'I can't,' is that it reinforces a fixed mindset. When you've got a fixed mindset, you believe that your talent, your abilities, and your intelligence are fixed and unchangeable. They are not capable of growing or changing. You're deciding for yourself that this is just the way it is. This is who you are, and that change is not possible. You're deciding to be stagnant. No good.

So, when you really boil it down, saying 'I can't' is keeping you stuck. The worst part about it, is that you're doing it to yourself. I know it sounds crazy, but I've been there, I've done it. The only thing saying 'I can't' does, is help you stand in your own way.

Really, saying 'I can't' keeps you from expanding and growing because you're not challenging yourself. You're not asking for more of yourself. It stops you before you get started. It takes you out of the process of change, because you've already decided ahead of time that change is just not possible for you. All right?

Somewhat similar, but still unique and different from 'I can't' is the phrase, "I shouldn't. I shouldn't be eating this. I shouldn't keep hitting the snooze alarm and sleeping through my morning. I shouldn't ask for 'me' time. I shouldn't start the side business, even though I'm really excited about it." What is yours?

'Shouldn't' is unhelpful when you're trying to change up your life, because it implies a number of assertions. First, similar to when you say 'I can't,' when you say 'I shouldn't,' you're creating a limit on yourself. You're placing a limit on your capacity.

When I have a client tell me she shouldn't do something, it makes me wonder what external force or expectation she's allowing to influence her. When she tells me, "I shouldn't be eating this cookie," what does that mean? Who's going to get after her if she eats a cookie? What is the

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

consequence if she does eat it? Why shouldn't she eat it? When I think of "should," I think obligation. But who are you really obligated to? I would argue that you're obligated to no one but yourself.

The other pattern I've noticed is that when you use the phrase 'I shouldn't,' that term "should" creates an unnecessary pressure to conform. That could be conforming to your family, your work, or social norm. But then, when you don't conform, you feel a heavy dose of guilt or shame.

So, think about it. Most often, your use of the word "should" generally comes from perceived external standards and expectations that are the norm. There can be tremendous guilt or shame when you don't meet those expectations.

When I think of the word "should," I think of an external influence that pretends to know what's best for you. But that's b.s. When you "should" all over yourself, you are creating a moral attachment to the decisions you're making. But it doesn't have to be that way.

As an example, I will often have a client tell me, "I really shouldn't sleep through my alarm." Then she will proceed to beat herself up about it, as if there is something fundamentally or morally wrong with her because she's hitting the snooze button.

She'll get very down on herself that everyone else gets up early to exercise but her, so something is wrong if she's not doing it, too. But the only one making these judgments on herself is her. There is no moral issue at stake here. It's your wakeup time, there is no guilt. There is no shame. There is no right or wrong here, and there's no obligation you need to live up to.

So, the other piece to this, is that using the word "should or shouldn't," takes you out of the equation. It takes your values and priorities out of the decision, and instead leaves the decision to an external standard that may not even line up with your own values.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

What this means is that when you're operating and acting under the guise of what you "should or shouldn't" do, you may end up acting in a way that's not true and authentic to you. It can lead you to feel disconnected from yourself. And when you take action from a place of obligation, that's not going to last. It's not going to be meaningful or sustainable.

When you decide, "I shouldn't eat pizza anymore," but you're not making that decision from your own beliefs and values, it's not going to work. It has to be an internal guidepost, made from a place of truth and genuineness with yourself, in order for that change to really happen.

So, "should" can also come across as indecisive. It's like saying, "Maybe I do want to change my career. But maybe I don't. Maybe I just don't want to." It's non-committal. And when you're changing your life, I can't have you being non-committal. Because the second things get hard, you will revert to what you know and bolt.

When you tell me, "I shouldn't drink after stressful days at work anymore," that's a thought. But it tells me you haven't fully committed. You haven't made the decision with any finality. You're leaving the door open. It's like saying, "I really shouldn't have this enormous glass of wine I poured for myself. But maybe just this one time, because it's been a really bad day. And then I'll stick to it."

No, I'm encouraging you to ask for more of yourself. I'm asking you to make a decision, and when you do, you mean it. "Should and shouldn't" gives you wiggle room to change your mind and back down from your decision, which will leave you right where you started.

When you declare that you shouldn't do something, you're not really declaring anything. Do you see that? You're not deciding anything. Instead, you're making an assertion about an external expectation, but you're leaving the door open. "Maybe I'll drink the wine, and maybe I won't." "Shouldn't" does not give you any real direction, and it doesn't lead you to an actual decision.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

The other downside of using “I shouldn't,” is that most often it's fear based. The undertones of “should” are based in guilt and shame, which is generally not where legitimate, long standing, meaningful change comes from. You can't beat yourself up into better, right? I've said that a thousand times.

So, making decisions from a place of “should,” with traces of guilt and shame attached, that generally does not bode well for genuine change. When you're changing up your life and getting serious about changing your diet, your exercise, your career, your schedule, whatever it is, it feels so much better to pursue a positive outcome instead of avoiding a negative outcome.

Using “should” implies avoiding a negative outcome, and that's not the foundation I want to establish. This will make more sense in just few minutes, okay? So, the key thing to take note of here is, whether you find yourself saying “I can't or I shouldn't,” the one unifying trait about both of these phrases is that it takes you out of the picture.

Both phrases are extremely disempowering. They paint a picture where you are not in control. They take you out of the decision making process, and leave your choices to an external force that does not come from you as a person with free will.

You're taking away your own authority. Whether that's due to your own perceived limitations, or due to perceived external limitations, “can't and shouldn't” do not move you forward at all.

I know, I'm making a big, huge hairy deal on four little words, “I can't, I shouldn't.” But I've heard them from you so often, that I think it's essential that we dismantle them, dissect them, and see them for what they really are. These words are blocking you. They're keeping you stuck.

So, if you want to get out of your own way, it most definitely starts with your thoughts. I've said that plenty of times on the podcast. If you want to change your life, we most definitely need to get your thinking on board.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

That's where practicing awareness, and practicing your thinking, comes in. Then, once you've got your thinking on board, and you're practicing believing new and different thoughts about yourself, the next step is speaking differently. Because remember, your words are a reflection of your beliefs. And those words shape your reality.

If you want to succeed at any change, your language is going to need an upgrade. Okay? If your m.o. is to tell me all the things you can't or shouldn't do, we're going to need to work on how you talk about yourself and your life. So, pay attention. Notice the words that come out of your mouth.

That means slowing down and actually listening. What are the words you use when you talk about yourself? Do you call yourself an idiot? Do you call yourself lazy? Do you say that you have no willpower? Do you say that you can't lose weight? Do you say that you shouldn't work as many hours as you do? Are those words that you use? Are they helping you and moving you forward? Or are those words keeping you right where you are?

Really think about that and think about how you talk about yourself. If you don't like what you're hearing when you talk about yourself, keep listening. Here is a key phrase I want to introduce you to. I'm encouraging you to use it liberally. You can say it out loud, because I think it's important for you to hear yourself say it. But I also think it's important to make these words part of your self-talk.

My goal is that these words become part of your daily language and that you believe them to your core. Those words are, I choose. That's it, I choose. Take a second and contrast 'I choose' with the other two phrases "I can't and I shouldn't.'

What do you notice? Here's what I notice. When you say, for example, "I am choosing to skip dessert tonight," versus, "I can't or I shouldn't have dessert tonight," what is the difference there? The difference is huge.

When you say, "I am choosing to," it implies authority. You are making the decision, no one else is, and it's coming from a place of empowerment. 'I

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

choose' is putting yourself very much back into the equation. It's putting you in charge, and that is exactly where you want to be when you're making decisions about how you will live your life. Take your authority back from whatever external powers you've given them to, and make your decision from a place of strength.

When you state 'I choose to,' you are being proactive about your decision. You are not leaving your choice up to chance. You're not leaving your choice up to your perceived limitations. You're not leaving your choice up to external expectations, whether those are real or imagined.

It's you, and you only, who's in charge. And it feels really, really good to declare it. "I choose to skip ice cream today, because I don't need it. Because I don't want it." Make the decision a clear choice.

The other upside to stating 'I choose,' is that it gives you clarity. Remember when we were talking through "should." When you use "should" that is anything but clear. To me, it showed it means maybe you will, maybe you won't, but the decision is up in the air. It's very wishy washy.

You know what happens when you leave decisions to chance, especially big decisions about changing your life. When you leave things to chance, they generally don't happen. "Should," I would argue very much, leaves your decisions to chance.

So instead, when you declare, "I choose to get up at 5:30 tomorrow morning for a workout," there's no question, right? There's no maybe, maybe not; there's a decision. There's no more hemming and hawing. You're taking out the ambiguity, and that gives you clarity.

If you're going to move forward towards your goal of morning exercise, it's best if you declare it loud and clear by *choosing* it. "I am choosing to get up at 5:30 tomorrow to exercise."

The other cool thing that happens when you say 'I choose' is that you create a sense of accountability with yourself. The phrase 'I choose,' by

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

nature, recognizes that you have the capacity and power to make decisions that are in alignment with what matters to you. And it feels really, really good to live in alignment with your values.

So, you know I'm all about having a plan. I've said it a number of times before, but it bears repeating, the hardest work you will do to change your life is following through on the things you said you were going to do. Seriously.

It's not about the cookies. It's not about the morning alarm. It's not about your resume, really. Those things are all secondary. The hardest thing you will do to change your life is do what you say you're going to do, and feel all of the feelings that come up when you do them.

But here's the thing, when you make a decision ahead of time and you make a plan, "I'm going to bring a salad and chicken breast to work for lunch," there it is. There is your plan.

Now, the next piece of this is sticking to it and following through. That means when your coworkers ask if you want to order takeout with them, you choose not to. You don't have to say it out loud to your coworkers, a simple, "No, thank you," is fine. But I'm encouraging you to say it very loudly to yourself. "I choose not to order takeout today, because that does not align with my goals."

Contrast that to, "Sorry, I can't order takeout with you today because I'm on a diet. I really shouldn't order takeout, but maybe just an appetizer." Do you see the difference here? Again, the difference is huge. It's the difference between making an empowered, deliberate decision that is in line with your goals, versus making a disempowered decision that feels like it was put upon you.

It feels good to make your choices from a place of strength and authority, instead of from a place of restraint. 'Can't and shouldn't' imply limitations. 'Can't and shouldn't' make you feel like you're being forced into something. But that's not the case, you're not being forced into anything.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

That's just it. Remember that you always have a choice. I know I've said it before, but in every situation you have a choice. You are a human with free will, you have a choice. It's not that you can't get takeout, you can. It's not that you should or shouldn't get takeout, you can. Instead, it's choosing not to have takeout, and being 100% okay with that. It's being at peace with your decision.

The more you practice framing your decisions with 'I choose or I choose not,' the more authority you exert. The more you establish agency over your choices, the more you reinforce your own self-control and self-efficacy.

Here's the other thing, I said it earlier but it applies here. What comes out of your mouth comes into your life. So, when you declare, "I choose to..." or "I choose not to..." and you mean it, you foster your own personal responsibility. Saying 'I choose or I choose not' reflects ownership.

When you choose to do or not do something, you put yourself in charge of your decisions, instead of being at the effect of outside forces that are either real or imagined. 'I choose' is proactive instead of reactive. 'I choose' is empowering. 'I choose' reflects autonomy and control.

That is exactly what I want you to have in order to change your life. All right? So, there it is. I hope that this serves as a wakeup call and encourages you to start paying closer attention to your words.

Think about it. How do you talk about yourself? How do you talk about your life? Are the words you use supportive and moving you forward? Or are the words you use keeping you stuck in a life that is less than optimal? Notice how you speak. Notice how your partner or your friends speak. Then, notice what results those create.

If you want to level up your life, it starts with your thinking. Of course, it always comes back to your thoughts. I love being able to show them to you through your words, because your words matter a lot. If you want to talk about this more, let's go.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

Ep #73: Change Your Words, Change Your Life

When you coach with me, we work on your thoughts and your mindset. Then, we get to work on the way you talk about yourself so that your sentences reflect the kind of person you want to be. Check out my website. Go to www.CarrieHollandMD.com/contact and let's talk about how coaching can help you. All right?

Thank you, again, for hanging out with me. I'll catch you again next week.

If you like what you've been hearing, please review the show. I would love to get your feedback and ideas. Your suggestions have inspired episodes and will help me make the show better for you. Share this podcast with a friend, text a show link, share a screenshot, or post a link to the show on your social media. Be sure to tag me @CarrieHollandMD on either Instagram or Facebook so I can follow along and engage with you.

This is how we get the word out to other working moms who want to feel strong, inside and out. If you know someone who wants to feel better or eat and move differently but she is too tired or too busy, it is time to change things up. You know making that change starts with how you think, and that is what we do here on the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. I'll see you next week.

Thanks for listening to *Strong as a Working Mom*. If you want more information on how to eat, move, and think, so you can live in the body you want, with the mind to match, visit me at CarrieHollandMD.com.