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## Fine is fine, except when it isn't

By [KRISTI L. GUSTAFSON](#), Staff writer

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Unless we're talking about dining, wine or china, if I tell you something's "fine," it borders on bad.

I, and many others, see this "fine" as an F-word, an acronym for Fouled-up, Insecure, Neurotic and Evasive.

"In our culture, 'fine' usually implies fair, but not good or great. If we want to say something is good or great, we choose uplifting, energizing words which translate to 'better than average.' Fine implies average or mediocre," says Jill Spiegel, author of "Jill Spiegel's How To Talk To Anyone About Anything."

"This goes back to elementary school terminology. Great is an 'A.' Good is a 'B.' Fine is a 'C.'?"

C's never flew with me, and neither does "fine."

And the fact that Merriam-Webster defines the word "fine" as "excellent," "very well" or "superior" is plain wrong.

When a friend, colleague or my boyfriend say something's "fine," paranoia sets in. I lament over what's wrong, and I'm usually convinced the problem was my fault. If anyone declares their current state as "fine," I deem that worrisome and must get to the bottom of the issue.

Many females, it seems, are like me. They read negativity into "fine."

Guys hear — or say — the four-letter word and take it at face value. But they shouldn't.

"When women use the word fine, particularly in conversation with a man, it usually means the opposite, and a man should shudder," says Debbie Mandel, the Long-Island-based author of "Turn On Your Inner Light: Fitness for Body, Mind and Soul."

Women responding to a recent blog post on the topic say "fine" leaves their lips when something's brewing or they just don't want to get into the details.

Jaime, a female reader of On the Edge, said: "I use this word way too much, and usually when things are anything but 'fine.' However, even though it tends to seem like it begs the asker to dig deeper, that is usually the last thing I want. I use 'fine' more in the sense that things suck right now, but I really do not care to explain further."

Delivery plays a huge role. "Dammmmn, girl, you look fine" says nothing negative. In fact, that's a compliment.

"The symphony put on a fine performance!" denotes positivity.

But a monotone "I'm fine" at best means neither bad nor good. Fine, simply put, falls flat.

Besides, "fine" says very little (unless you're the type to read into things).

On MySpace and Facebook, we describe ourselves as "miserable," "stupendous" or "decent." All of which give greater insight.

We could just establish a new acronym for fine. Maybe Fabulous, Insightful, (on cloud) Nine and Excellent. With that meaning, I'd be happy to declare myself F.I.N.E.

Kristi Gustafson can be reached at 454-5494 or by e-mail at [kgustafson@timesunion.com](mailto:kgustafson@timesunion.com). Check out her blog at <http://blogs.timesunion.com/kristi>.