

## A Real Mom: Thank Goodness for Sappy Greeting Cards

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It would be easy to poke fun at the greeting-card industry for creating such an abundance of holidays and approaches to expression. But when you aren't quite sure how to say what you're feeling, or don't have the fortitude to do so, browsing the greeting-card racks to find just the right one is the next best thing.

Thank goodness there are a variety of greeting cards. These include an overwhelming array of situations from expected to farfetched, as well as styles ranging from humorous to sappy. I used to roll my eyes when someone selected a sappy, long-winded greeting card. Ugh, I'd barely read the pre-printed message composed by a copywriter who doesn't know me. Lately, however, I've rethought this reaction.

For Mother's Day last year, my son gave me one of "those" cards. He was no longer able to live in our home and was making some tough rather stupid life choices - the ones that were as hard on him as on us. He specifically said he looked at a lot of cards and the one he picked out seemed to say what was in his heart and I know it was what he wanted to say but probably couldn't find the words on his own.

I smiled as I read the card:

*Mom, for all of my life, you've wanted the best for me. You've worked hard, made do, and put others first more often than anybody knows. I didn't understand all that when I was younger, but I do now. And although I may not put it into words very well or very often, I want the best for you, too. I want you to be extra nice to yourself, to do the things that interest you and fulfill you, to enjoy these years in your life. I want you to be happy, because you're such a good mom and because I love you very much.*

Later that day, I reflected on the card and imagined him picking it out at CVS when he might otherwise have spent the money on pot, and it brought a welcome flood of tears that I'd been holding back for months as I tried to remain strong in the face of challenge. I read and re-read that card. It was healing. It was meaningful. It was sincere.

Several months later, for my son's 19th birthday, I perused the card rack and selected several options from my husband and me - one plain, safe and straightforward (boring); one with Snoopy that was upbeat and cute; one that was sappy yet short and to the point; and one that was sappy, and yes, verbose.

Sappy would allow us to say what we wanted to without the ownership of saying it ourselves - we could blame it on the greeting card! And, having received a sappy Mother's Day card, I owed my son the return favor. So, we selected the sappy yet short and to-the-point card.

With all sincerity, my son said, "I like it, Mom. Great card."

Yes, the card accomplished its purpose to convey and express our feelings in a sincere way, and more importantly in a way our son could accept.

Our son repeated the gesture by picking out another sappy card for me on my birthday. It was nice to hear how much he loves me -- even if Hallmark wrote the words -- because I knew he meant it.

Fast forward six months, on my husband's birthday, our son wrote: "Thank you for all the love and support all these years. Happy Birthday, Dad. I love you!"

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