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How to Apologize

posted by Jason Kottke 🕒 Sep 25, 2023

Elizabeth Spiers for the NY Times on how to apologize (given the recent spate of celebrity non-apologies): [I Have a Question for the Famous People Who Have Tried to Apologize.](#)

The first step in a good apology is acknowledging harm. The second is expressing genuine regret, and where possible, acknowledging our shortcoming. Our intentions are not always good. Sometimes we're selfish. Sometimes we don't know what we're doing, and sometimes we fail to consider the consequences. If we can admit these things, it helps repair trust.

Then we vow, in good faith, to not perpetuate the same harm again.

The last step is repair. This means directly addressing the harm done — not via self-flagellation on YouTube nor with any expectation of forgiveness.

I [posted about](#) how to apologize a few years ago after

reading [Katie Heaney's piece](#) on, wait for it, celebrity non-apologies:

Here are the six components of an apology from Beth Polin:

1. An expression of regret — this, usually, is the actual "I'm sorry."
2. An explanation (but, importantly, not a justification).
3. An acknowledgment of responsibility.
4. A declaration of repentance.
5. An offer of repair.
6. A request for forgiveness.

I think about these components whenever giving or receiving apologies — it's a great framework to keep in mind.

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