Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Colin Lowther. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Have you ever agreed to meet a friend for a meal? Imagine this. You arrived early and got a good table. You waited. And waited. Now she is almost 30 minutes late. You begin to worry. What if something happened? What if she is hurt and needs help? You send her a message asking if everything is ok. She says that everything is fine. You ask if she is going to be there soon. She messages back, “I forgot!” You sit there for a minute. You do not feel good about what happened. But what can you say? Anyone can forget a meeting. What really makes you angry is that your friend did not say “I am sorry.” Today’s Spotlight is on when, why, and how people say, “I am sorry.” People apologize in many different ways and for different reasons. Some people say “sorry” more often than other people. And saying sorry is also cultural. People in some cultures apologize more than people in different cultures. For example, many people believe that people from Canada apologize more often than people from the United States. And people from Britain and Japan apologize a lot each day. In fact, in Japan, there are over 20 different ways to apologize. People say “I am sorry” for many different reasons. Some people will say it if they walk into you on the street. “Oops! Sorry!” Other people will say it after they say or do something that is not nice. “I’m sorry.” People say sorry if they need your help. “Sorry, can you help me?” Or they may say sorry when something bad happened to another person - even if they had nothing to do with it. “I am sorry that happened to you.” People even say “I’m sorry” about the weather! “Sorry it’s so cold today!” In many of these cases, saying sorry is easy. But what if you hurt someone you love? Why is it sometimes so difficult to say? Telling someone, “I am sorry” should be easy. It is just words! It does not cost any money. It does not require great skill or education. Then why can it be so difficult to do? People find all sorts of reasons to avoid saying “I am sorry”. They justify what they did. That is, they explain how it was the best thing to do. Sometimes a person who should say sorry only sees what the other person did. They point out what that person did wrong. People do this because saying that you are sorry means admitting that you hurt someone else. People do not like to feel guilty. But telling someone “I am sorry” is an important step in fixing relationships. Aaron Lazare is a psychiatrist who studied what an apology - saying sorry - can do. In an article for Psychology Today he wrote, “I am always amazed by how many of my friends and patients of all kinds hold on to anger for years. It cuts through their own lives and the lives of family and friends. So many of these things could have been avoided or healed with a real apology.” But what is a real apology? Many experts say there is more to a good apology than just saying the words “I am sorry”. There are several steps. The first step is to admit that you did something wrong. Be clear, not general. Name what you did. For example, do not say, “I am sorry I hurt you.” Instead, say, “I am sorry that I broke your glasses.” You need to do this to show that you understand how your actions affected the other person. You need to explain that you understand their pain. Next, you need to admit responsibility. You can explain why you did what you did. You can tell the other person that you were not trying to hurt them. But try to imagine what the other person is feeling. And take responsibility for what you did. Finally, you need to tell the person that you will not do that thing again. Explain how you will change your behavior. This can help them rebuild the trust in your relationship. But make sure you honor your promise to change. You need to say, “I am sorry” But you need to prove it as well. Also remember that sometimes, one apology is not enough. Sometimes, when a person is hurt very badly, or has lost their trust in you, it may take a long time for them to accept your apology and forgive you. Here is an example of what an apology like this could sound like. Imagine the situation from the beginning of this program. You are meeting a friend, and she forgot your meeting. Your friend could apologize like this: “I am sorry that I did not meet you at the restaurant. It was not kind of me to leave you waiting. Next time I will make sure to set a reminder on my mobile phone so that I do not forget. I hope you will forgive me.” Many people think that saying “I am sorry” is a sign of weakness. But Aaron Lazare disagrees. He writes, “An apology is a show of strength. It is an act of honesty because we admit we did wrong. It is an act of generosity because we are giving worth to the people we hurt. It offers hope for a new relationship, possibly even a stronger one. The apology communicates that we are serious about the relationship. Saying “I am sorry” is an act of courage because it opens us up to shame and the risk of feeling stupid, being rejected, and experiencing new pain from the person we hurt.” Saying I’m sorry is often difficult. But it is worth the pain for a better relationship. What about you? Have you ever had to say “I am sorry”? Was it easy or difficult? What would have happened if you did not say it? Tell us what you think. You can leave a comment on our website. Or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. You can also comment on Facebook at Facebook.com/spotlightradio. The writer of this program was Adam Navis. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, ‘Saying Sorry’. You can also get our programs delivered directly to your Android or Apple device through our free official Spotlight English app. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.