



THE ART OF APOLOGY

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The art of apologizing is critical to healthy relationships. The good news is, even if you didn't have a good model to follow at home growing up, apologizing well is something that can be learned.

One of the things that can get in the way of our ability to apologize is a strong feeling of shame.

We may feel it's not OK to make a mistake, and if we do make a mistake we feel so badly about ourselves that we spend lots of energy on "image management"..... justifying our actions, putting on the mask of perfection, unwilling or unable to admit that we acted in a less than stellar fashion. Shame keeps us from being able to own our mistakes and make amends for them.

On the other hand, shame can put us into a place where we feel so badly about ourselves that we apologize for things that aren't even ours to own. We may mix up guilt (I've done something bad) with shame (I am bad) and end up apologizing for ourselves as a person or for who we are.

Let's learn to discern what is truly ours to own, then step up into that ownership with a deep and heartfelt apology (keeping shame out of it) when it is appropriate. All healthy relationships have conflict and hurt, but the magic is in the repair!

THE BEST APOLOGY

DON'T apologize for someone else's feelings.
"I'm sorry you're mad," is not an apology.
It's condescending.

DO apologize for your own actions and attitude.
"I'm sorry I was rude," is an apology that takes ownership. Be specific about what you did wrong.
"I'm sorry for whatever made you mad" is NOT going to work.

DON'T add an excuse to your apology.
"I'm sorry I was rude, but I was really irritated," means you're not really sorry. You feel justified for the way you acted and you expect to be excused. One way to remember this is that when you say "I'm sorry, but ..." you're really just a sorry butt.

DO ask for forgiveness when you apologize.
"I'm sorry," on it's own, is just a statement. It requires no response. "Will you forgive me?" is a humble request that can rebuild a relationship. When you ask your spouse to forgive you, wait. Listen. Be prepared for them to say in response, "I need a minute, I'm not there right now." When you are in the wrong, you are never owed forgiveness.
Be grateful when you receive it.

DON'T expect a reciprocal apology.
Let's say you were in a fight. You were both rude and hostile to each other and now you've decided to be the brave one and apologize first. Do not apologize expecting your spouse to apologize equally. When you recognize you have done something wrong, just own your part of it. The end.

DO attempt to make a repair.
Once you get through the brutal, "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" it's wise to make the next step and ask, "Is there anything I can do to make this right?"

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