

WHEN WE APOLOGIZE

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Apologizing is an etiquette we are taught from the time we are very young. Most small children will apologize simply because they are taught to or wish to please. This isn't a bad thing. It is just how children learn. However, as children mature, there is opportunity to explain the steps of an apology more specifically. I dare say most adults, including your author, don't think about this. I only started thinking about it after working so closely with people who need help apologizing. Here are some helpful steps if you want someone to accept your apology.

1. When apologizing, be specific about your offense. It's important to show you are aware of the sequence of behaviors that lead to the offense. In doing so, to the best of your ability, it lets the offended person know you have thought about how you have impacted them. Do not try to justify your words or behavior. Instead, focus on the hurt and pain you caused.

2. Allow the offended person to ask any and all questions they may need to ask. Along with this is the real possibility their emotions of hurt or anger may surface. You need to create an atmosphere where you are willing to listen. Your willingness to listen tells them you are present and ready to affirm the realness of their experience. Without this step, the person is often left feeling shut down and not understood or heard. They may end up feeling pressured to hurry up and forgive the offense.

3. Give honest, empathetic responses for the hurt you caused. You want to make sure your empathy is genuine because you are telling the person they have value. Include what you are willing to do to stop or prevent the behavior from continuing. This lets the other person know that you are serious about not re-offending. The offended person may or may not identify with any revealed reasons.

4. After you do steps 1-3, then ask for forgiveness. A ritual often used in the therapy room is for the offender to kneel before the offended. Whether or not you kneel, this paints a picture of what is taking place on the emotional level. It's a picture of humbling one's self before the other to repair the relationship.

We all have Scales of Justice within us. This last step cannot happen unless both are diligent in working toward awareness and acknowledgment of their inner struggle for revenge. Without this work, the process of an apology will falter and the one receiving the apology will punish the offender. Either way, it is never too late or impossible to apologize. Even if you are not granted forgiveness, you will have done all you know to make things right. It is just as hard to receive as it is to give.

How Does Forgiveness Differ From Trust?

Forgiveness is not earned. It is a gift...just as God's grace has provided for our salvation. God's grace becomes the foundation of our forgiveness. We pass on the same gift to those who apologize to us.

Trust is Earned

In scripture, TRUST is defined as, "flee to something or someone for protection or refuge" when talking about the Lord. The Lord God becomes the One to place our confidence in and to feel secure in. Invite Jesus In! Run to Him!

Relationships grow in trust as each person is willing to work toward being calm and understanding the perspective of another. By doing so, they are working toward being able to be vulnerable and respected at the same time.

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