

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO APOLOGIZE?

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Remember getting caught for stealing someone else's toy on a playdate as a child? Ashamed, you'd cast your eyes down and say "sorry" in a whisper, and it was all over. You'd probably go right back to playing. Unfortunately, a whispered "sorry" doesn't cut it in adulthood. Most people are not taught how to properly apologize, which in turn makes admitting you're wrong and making amends difficult.

Before learning how to apologize, let's figure out what an apology is. The literal definition of an apology is to express regret for something one has done wrong and seek forgiveness. Apologizing is about taking ownership for what your actions intentionally or unintentionally did and showing that you understand how your actions affected the other person. An apology is necessary if you have done something wrong or hurtful - even if it was an accident.

I can't stress enough how important apologizing is in relationships. Acknowledging, understanding, and repairing hurts are all vital parts in a healthy relationship. Taking the time to own up to your

actions will bring you closer in your relationships. No matter how big or small an offense is, apologizing releases you from the bondages of guilt and shame.

Here are the five steps you can take for making a sincere apology.

Step 1: Say the words "I'm sorry".

If you don't start an apology with "I'm sorry" - your spouse/friend/coworker may not know what your intentions are. Be up front and clear. This step is non-negotiable. You can change up the language if you want (example: "I feel bad about messing up"), but this step is important.

Step 2: Accept responsibility for your actions.

Say what you did wrong. Try the words "I was wrong for (insert action here)". When you own your actions, you learn from them and grow so you won't make the same mistakes again. Laying down your pride can be the hardest step when apologizing. No one likes to feel like they were in the wrong. But if you were, make sure you accept full responsibility.

Step 3: Acknowledge the other person's feelings.

An expression of empathy really helps set the path to understanding and reconciliation. Let the other

person know you understand how your actions affected them. Try "I'm guessing what I did made you feel unheard or angry." or "I would be so upset if I was in your shoes." Be careful - "I'm sorry you feel that way" is not true empathy.

Step 4: Try to make a change.

Ask "What can I do to make it better?" or offer up a change-action. An apology without action is pointless. When you ask what you can do better next time, you show that you don't want to make the same mistake again.

Step 5: Ask for forgiveness.

Give them a chance to make a decision for themselves. Some people need to hear that they have a choice to let go of the pain/hurt you have caused. Forgiveness allows space for you to reconnect again.

I challenge you to try out these steps with someone that you care about, and see if it helps bring you closer together. Having a closer, trusting relationship is the ultimate goal!