

Thoughts on What Make a Good Apology

Some thoughts from the discussion:

Discussion around whether a good apology should include reasons why the person behaved in the way that they did:

- some attendees said that this is just making excuses and can lessen the apology
- others said that having understanding helps to mitigate the impact
- good point: The apology needs to speak to the emotions, the feelings that were hurt, and reasons are speaking to the mind. While there might be a time for the reasons, it is not what needs to be heard and tended to in the apology.

Talked about whether an apology needs to be given just because someone says that they need it, that their feelings were hurt. What if it's their perception that is wrong and not your actions? What if you are not sorry for what you did even if it did cause harm to the person?

- some discussion around deciding that the relationship is important and, while you may not say that what you have done is wrong or that you would change it, you can acknowledge the pain of the other person (that feelings were hurt, not the reasons behind it) and ask what you can do going forward to repair the relationship

Asked which is worse – the feeling of giving an apology or the feeling of asking for an apology? (general agreement that it is the asking for an apology as you are making yourself vulnerable to someone who has already hurt you)

How does it feel when we need an apology or need to give one? How does it feel in the body?

Discussed feelings of humiliation and being told that we have to give an apology to someone (imagine two kids in a playground or a kid that has stolen something from a store). Also discussed being made to give an apology as a part of the justice system.

- point made that it feels like you are 'swallowing your ego' and 'lowering yourself'

Discussed the difference between admission and apology

Discussed saying sorry versus asking for forgiveness

Discussed acts of contrition as ways of 'apologizing in their own way' without actually saying the words (i.e., buying flowers)

Also pointed out that we often also ask for apologies in our own way by acting hurt or withdrawing from someone.

Good discussion we will definitely return to – managing expectations:

- Part of apology, both giving and requesting, is managing expectations. Learn how to say how we feel without the expectation of an apology. Learn how to say we are sorry without the expectation of forgiveness.

Half-baked thought that we might return to:

Motivation behind apologies – how much is it about feeling disapproval and seeking out approval of others?

A few notes from posted readings:

Six (and a half) steps to a good apology: (from short article)

1. Say you're sorry. Not that you 'regret,' not that you're 'devastated.'
2. Say what it is that you are apologizing for. Be specific.
3. Show you understand why it was bad, take ownership and show that you understand why you caused hurt.
4. Don't make excuses.
5. Say why it won't happen again. What steps are you taking?
6. If it's relevant, make reparations.

And a half – listen.

Four parts of accountability: (from longer article)

1. Self-reflection
2. Apology
3. Repair
4. Changed behaviour

Quote from longer article: "We need to move away from 'holding people accountable' and instead work to support people to proactively take accountability for themselves."

We need to build a culture of accountability, where we understand the need for apologies, there is an expectation of them, and a safety around giving them.

Question from this: How do we set it up that people feel comfortable apologizing?