

Why Won't You Apologize? Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts

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October is



**CONFLICT RESOLUTION
MONTH IN COLORADO**

Listen. Talk. Work it Out.

Each year, Conflict Resolution Month in Colorado recommends a book for the community at large with the goals of spreading information and encouraging conversation on ways to manage conflicts at all levels of society. During these heavily charged times, when acknowledging hurt feelings and mending connections seems imperative, both at a national political and personal level, we wanted to focus on apologizing; or as Lerner puts it, "tak(ing) turns at being the offender and the offended." Lerner wholeheartedly believes that our ability to listen without defensiveness is at the core of a sincere apology.

The guiding questions: Are there relationships in our personal life or at a national level that could benefit from an apology or forgiveness? What is your experience? Can past pain be forgiven?

Why Is A Good Apology Essential?

A good heartfelt apology is essential. One that says, "Yes, I get it; I screwed up. Your feelings make sense, and I'm taking this seriously." Lerner warns that our failure to apologize can make any good relationship erode because we feel it when people do not hold themselves accountable for their actions or faults.

The three words, "I am sorry", can make us feel respected, validated, acknowledged, and cared for. Is a good apology important to you? Has a good apology worked on you?

Should You Always Forgive?

Forgiveness is complicated and it may take more than, "I'm sorry", to make amends. There is no adequate verbal apology for slavery, rape, incest, and other heavy topics. Nonetheless, we do need heartfelt apology language, restitution in some cases, and most importantly to continue to try. If the apologizer is serious about reconciliation, the apology is only the beginning of the journey.

As perfect as an apology can be, does it guarantee lasting forgiveness and should that be expected?

Are There Bad Apologies?

Absolutely. It's important to acknowledge bad apologies, both when giving and receiving one. "I'm sorry" is not enough if it's ambiguous, shaming, blame-reversing, justified, or a way to end an unpleasant conversation. Also, an apology can feel meaningless or not genuine when the person continues the behaviors that they claim to be sorry for.

Lerner doesn't want excuses. No, "I am sorry that you feel that way," "I am sorry that you reacted that way," "I am sorry that you are so sensitive," and "I am sorry that happened because I was tired, forgot, and so on." Have you experienced these types of "non-apologies"? Did it deepen the original hurt?

What has been your experience around forgiveness? Have you given or received a bad apology?

Do You Always Have To Apologize?

Apologizing is about giving one when it is due. Sometimes people can be over-apologizers, "I'm sorry I reached over for my things/I got in your way/I walked by you." On the other extreme, there are those who are non-apologizers; they simply will not give an apology.

Has there been a situation where you have felt pressured or forced to apologize? Did any attitudes from your upbringing or popular culture influence your decisions when giving and receiving apologies?