

Value of an apology

Eliane Markoff- October 2019

My hope is that this brief article may serve as a guide to those who are struggling with the word, “apology,” or to be more precise, with the act of apologizing.

The irony is that many people believe that apologizing has a negative impact on them. They are worried their apology makes them appear weaker, or shows insecurity; and depending upon the circumstances may be used against them in the future. For the great majority of the time, however, these concerns are unfounded.

Taking the step to apologize, or expressing regret, or asking for forgiveness is almost always the most honorable and noble gesture when we have wronged someone else. We all make mistakes in life. The irony is that they actually are often the reason for our success in life. The pain of our mistakes motivates us to do better and not repeat them. Although certain mistakes cannot be corrected, most can with a simple and sincere apology.

One of the biggest mistakes made is to try and cover up our mistakes. We do that by not being true to ourselves and to others. We rationalize our mistakes with false narratives that some of us end up believing. All that just to avoid an apology. The unfortunate truth is some of us don't have just enough self-confidence to apologize.

To enable the apology to break through, sometimes we need to put our egos aside. We need to appreciate that in most situations, an apology will not only allow us to gain respect, but it also can create a stronger bond with the other party. Convincing oneself that denying the wrong makes us appear stronger is self-defeating and only creates an internal conflict that makes us weaker, not stronger.

- When faced with a situation that requires an apology, ask yourself:
- What will an apology cost me?
- What benefits may accrue after the apology?
- What costs may I incur after an apology?

There will be scenarios that unfortunately escalate to the point where an apology is no longer effective. Often one hears:

- “If only he had apologized earlier, I never would have pursued this action.”
- “All I wanted was for her to express regret for how she treated me during that meeting.”
- “I am not really looking for financial compensation, I just wanted him to express remorse for the pain he caused me.”

If you have wronged someone, I encourage you to find the courage and confidence to *sincerely* express regret, apologize and let him or her know it will not happen again. But if you unknowingly wrong someone, explain to the other party your honest mistake when it does come to your attention.

An apology can be liberating, and the most valued part of an apology is that it often results in forgiveness, a priceless gift that we can all give ourselves.

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