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# THE POWER APOLOGY

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## 5 STEPS TO A GENUINE APOLOGY



# THE POWER APOLOGY

Everyone makes mistakes and offends others from time to time. Often it is not your intention to hurt another person, but they are nevertheless offended by what you have said or done. Other times you may feel vindictive and say or do something that intentionally hurts someone. Whatever the reason behind your actions, when you realise that you have hurt someone, if you want to restore your relationship you need to make an apology.

Use these five steps to make a power apology.

(They can be used with loved ones, workmates, neighbours, customers and clients or even strangers you have offended.)



## "I DID THAT" - TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

*We must be the change we wish to see in the world.*

It can be difficult to admit that you are wrong. This can make you doubt your self-worth, and no one likes to be portrayed as a failure. However, the fact is that you will make mistakes and poor decisions that hurt others. To make a good apology you will need to admit that you were wrong and accept responsibility for your own actions.

For many individuals, all they want is to hear you say, "I did that and I was wrong." If you do not accept responsibility for your actions, the other person may not feel that the apology was meaningful and sincere. You may need to overcome your ego and the desire to not be viewed as a failure in order to own up to hurtful actions. To admit your mistake can make a world of a difference to those who need to hear it.

“to make a good apology you will need to admit that you were wrong and accept responsibility for your own actions.”

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## 2

## "WHAT I DID HURT YOU" - ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR HURT

The second step in a power apology is to acknowledge fully that what you have done has hurt the other person. You might be tempted to avoid this step so that you don't feel the other person's pain and distress. It can be difficult to face the fact that what you did really has hurt them.

When you acknowledge what you have done and how it has hurt them, you admit your guilt for causing them this pain. This is their experience and they need to hear from you that you see their pain.

Don't be like the politician who, when addressing a group protesting that his remarks had been particularly offensive to them, said "If I have offended anyone I am sorry". He had offended them!

“It is difficult to face the fact that what you did really has hurt them.”

# 3

## "I AM SORRY I HURT YOU" - EXPRESS REGRET

This is your sincere response to the other person's emotional hurt that you acknowledged in steps one and two.

Sometimes a simple "I'm sorry" is all that is needed, especially for small hurts. There may be no need for explanation provided the apology has truly come from the heart. Other times it may be more powerful to say exactly why you are sorry: "I'm sorry that I did that [name what you did] because it has caused you so much trouble/hurt you/cost you time and money/damaged your relationship with your parents etc."

Expressing regret gets right to the point. You don't make excuses or attempt to deflect blame. Above all, when you express regret you take ownership of the wrong. You show a sincere commitment to repair and rebuild the relationship.

This step is most powerful when you show sincerity not only verbally, but also through your body language. Unflinching eye contact and a gentle, but firm touch are two ways that body language can underscore sincerity in most Western cultures. Other cultures have different ways of showing sincerity.

“ when you express regret you take ownership of the wrong. you show a sincere commitment to repair and rebuild the relationship. ”

# 4

## "HOW CAN I MAKE IT UP TO YOU" - RESTITUTION

In order to make a power apology and be sincere, you need to make some kind of repayment or compensation for your offence. You may need to repair actual damage, but more often it could be a symbolic action to show you want to make amends. If you have hurt someone you love they often just wants to hear you say that you still love them. Each person and situation is different. A bouquet of flowers may do it or acts of kindness may show that you are wanting to make it up to them. In business it may be giving a discount or some free product or service.

Making restitution shows the hurt person you have a desire to right the wrong that you have done.

*“If you have hurt someone you love they often just wants to hear you say that you still love them”*

# 5

## "I WON'T DO IT AGAIN" - GENUINELY REPENT

It would be easy to doubt the sincerity of your apology if you do not express your desire to change your behaviour and avoid the situation in the future.

The other person cannot read your mind. Though you may be trying to change inside, if you do not verbalize your desire to change the other person may still question your sincerity. If you are in business you can tell the person what changes you will make so that others don't have the same problem in future.

You might not always be successful with your promised changes and further apology may be necessary in the future. But take the first steps and let the other person know this is what you are doing or will do.

# BONUS: REQUEST FORGIVENESS

## ESPECIALLY IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In close personal relationships, the hurt person may want you to physically ask for forgiveness. They may want assurance that you recognize the need for forgiveness. By asking forgiveness for your actions, you are asking your partner to still love you. When you request forgiveness you assure your partner that you want to see the relationship fully restored. It also proves to your partner that you are sincerely sorry for what you've done. It shows that you realize you've done something wrong. When you request forgiveness you show that you are willing to put the future of the relationship in their hands. You are leaving the final decision up to them – to forgive or not forgive.

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This leaves you vulnerable to the fear of rejection and the fear of failing, which is why this step can be difficult.

It's important to remember that there is a difference between asking for forgiveness and DEMANDING forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice the offended party makes. Demanding forgiveness takes away the sincerity of asking for it.

Don't treat forgiveness lightly. It is something to be cherished and appreciated. The act of forgiveness is hard on both sides – for the person who's asking and for the person who's forgiving.



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