



Giving an Effective Apology Webinar

Panel discussion led by Jayne Kinsman, LMFT and Nancy Burgoyne, Ph.D., ABPP

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- People often find it difficult to apologize due to feelings of defensiveness and not wanting to be seen as having bad intent. Remember that there is a difference between your intent vs. the impact that your words/actions have on someone.
- When going into an apology, it is important to regulate your emotions, have the courage to say what you're apologizing for, show that you understand why your words/actions were problematic or bad, and avoid bringing the other person into shared ownership.
- Using an active voice while apologizing is most effective (example: "I'm sorry that I insulted you vs. I'm sorry that you were insulted")
- Sometimes "I'm sorry" is simply good enough. The level of harm determines what is needed to be repaired.
- When apologizing, try your best to avoid making the apology about your experience. Only explain the situation if you need to; do not make excuses or justify your actions, ask for forgiveness, or make the other person take care of you.
- Forgiveness is a gift, not an assumed response when delivering an apology.
- Make it your focus to make the other person feel heard, and prepare to absorb the pain and hurt that they are feeling. Step back and listen to what the affected person has to say.
- When receiving and delivering an apology, remember to participate in reflective listening: listen to understand (vs. listening to speak) and reflect back what the other person is saying to ensure that you understand (ask, "do I have that right?").
- Be prepared to say the apology more than once. This is about reassurance and creating safety for the other person.
- If challenges persist, consider seeking relational therapy. Even a few sessions could help facilitate the conversation you are looking to have.

RESOURCES

- Abrahms Spring, Janis; (2005) *How Can I Forgive You? The Courage to Forgive, the Freedom Not To*
- Chapman, Gary and Thomas, Jennifer; (2006) *The Five Languages of Apology*
- Fruzzetti, Alan; (2006) *High-Conflict Couple: A Dialectical Behavior Therapy Guide to Finding Peace, Intimacy & Validation*
- Ingall, Marjorie; (2023) *Getting to Sorry: The Art of Apology at Work and at Home*
- Kador, John; (2009) *Effective Apology: Mending Fences, Building Bridges, and Restoring Trust*
- Lerner, Harriet; (2017) *Why won't you apologize? Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts*
- Sparacino, Bianca; (2015) *Seeds Planted in Concrete*