



# How to Apologize. . . when SORRY isn't enough

## What Makes a Good Apology?

Admitting when we're wrong is a great exercise in humility. We don't naturally want to apologize or admit we are wrong.

An appropriate confession will include the following characteristics:

### Be specific

Which of these two statements shows more humility? Which of these two statements would be the most meaningful for you to hear?

- *If I've offended you or hurt you in any way, I'm sorry.*
- *I was very selfish and insensitive when I...*

[specifically naming how you were selfish and insensitive].

- *That was wrong of me.*

Take a moment to reflect on the importance of a specific apology or confession. Why does it make such a difference to be specific?

*It seems important to be specific in an apology because*

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Use the words "I was wrong" instead of "I'm sorry."

To simply say, "I'm sorry" can sometimes mean: "I'm sorry I got caught", or "I'm sorry we can't get along." To say, "I was wrong" is more truthful. Using these words conveys true ownership of the offense. It lets the hearer know that you are taking responsibility for your part.

Don't offer excuses, explanations, or rationalizations

A good confession has no indication of excuse. Leave out any words like:

*"I didn't mean to \_\_\_\_\_, but ..."*

*"I wouldn't have \_\_\_\_\_ if you ..."*

## Acknowledge how the other person must have felt

A good confession reassures the other person that you understand why they were hurt. It helps them see that you “get it”! Which of the two statements would you most want to hear? Why?

- “I was wrong to hurt you.”
- “I was wrong to hurt you with my words. You probably felt criticized and embarrassed since all of our friends heard our conversation.”

I would most want to hear

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because

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## Ask specifically for forgiveness

As a last step of humility, a good confession makes a specific point of asking for the person’s forgiveness.

## Putting it all together

A meaningful confession might sound like:

*I’ve been selfish by not doing my part around the house. I know you work hard and feel overwhelmed at times. It was wrong of me to only think of myself and the things I have to do. Will you forgive me?*

*I was insensitive to you when I made those critical comments about your friend. It was wrong of me to judge her. I know you must have felt hurt because she is an important person in your life. Will you forgive me?*

Take time now to ask God’s Spirit to bring to mind any person who might need your confession.

- Is there any conflict that hasn’t been resolved?
- Have there been any arguments or harsh words exchanged in any of your relationships?
- Has there been any time when you haven’t kept a promise or haven’t followed through?

Write out your confession according to the guidelines above and then go to that person and share your heartfelt apology.

Write your confession here

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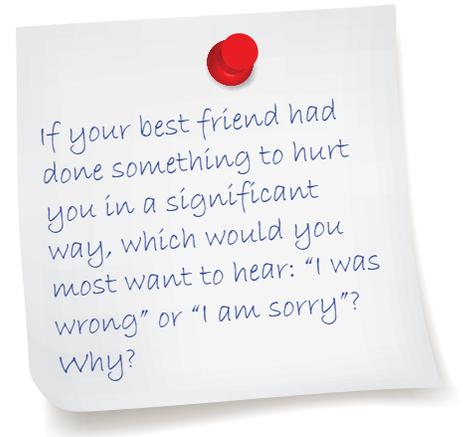
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Becoming a person who humbly confesses when they are wrong will produce strong, healthy relationships.