

National Relationships Repair Month

The Art Of Saying “I’m Sorry”

This Report is Part of Week Two of The
"National Relationship Repair Month".

To get your own copy of this report and the rest of the program,
please join us at
<http://nationalrelationshipsmonth.com>

National Relationships Repair Month

Table of Contents

<u>The Art Of Saying “I’m Sorry”</u>	3
<u>The Importance of Apologizing</u>	4
<u>How to Apologize</u>	6
<u>How Apologizing Gives You Emotional Integrity</u>	9
<u>Also From Creative Conflicts</u>	12

National Relationships Repair Month

The Art Of Saying “I’m Sorry”

Relationships are a delicate dance of proximity/separation. We get near by connecting with the other’s experiences, feelings and wishes, using communication. Sometimes, we misread the other person’s feelings or needs... and go ahead with our own decisions, straight to disaster.

Here is an example for you:

Joan was very contained and never asked directly for what she wanted; she would prefer suggesting ideas to her husband as gifts for her. Of course, this attitude left him in the dark... and bent over by TV ads, he decided that she needed a new vacuum cleaner.

Of course, when it’s not what she wanted, he then has to justify his decision: “Dear, I know you need one, and buying tools is a good decision. They last for ever and you can do the best job in the house.”

In her mind, Joan takes his decision to heart and runs with it. She feels now that he is a stranger and doesn’t understand “the real her”; he is ruining her fantasies of being understood, reducing her to a maid, etc. Saying thanks politely, she accepts the gift and in her mind she continues to dream up new desires, that only include herself.

Let’s say she eventually comes out and tells him that she wishes he had understood her needs better. Even if he apologizes now for not getting her the gift that she suggested, the gap is there. How could he apologize as to bridge the gap (appear again as understanding her deep needs?).

Of course, some of you are also saying: “**Why isn’t *she* the one who should apologize for being so obtuse?**” But that would contradict the very nature of relationships, right? “I will be here for you, and you will be here for me...” Let’s read on to see the answer.

National Relationships Repair Month

The Importance of Apologizing

Can you think back to a time in your relationship when an apology would have made everything go infinitely smoother? Can you explain why the apology wasn't forthcoming (even if it came later, when it helped less)?

We've saved the text on apology for last because quite often, being told to apologize to your spouse is a bitter pill for people to take. "It's not me, it's them," is an excuse we hear from more people than you'd think.

However, apology is the last step every partner must take toward relationship repair. How can you **possibly** heal a broken relationship if you don't let your partner know that you're **sorry** the two of you aren't together? That you're **sorry** that you didn't handle your end of things better? Hopefully by now, you've realized that even with the best intentions ("I always did my best and never tried to hurt him/her"), we can still starve our partners emotionally by not meeting their needs the way they need them to be met.

Let's go back to Joan and her husband. Both made communication mistakes, and each should logically apologize for their lack of clarity with the other. However, what's important to realize is that *neither* is absolved from the need to apologize. What's also important to realize is that Joan may not realize her mistake until her husband apologizes ("I'm sorry, it wasn't clear to me what you wanted") - similarly, he may not get an apology from her unless he knows how to frame an apology where a resolution is proposed ("Next time, let's sit down; you can tell me clearly from your heart what you need, and I will listen to you closely, because I love you and want you to be happy...").

That we all fear apologizing in a relationship is very well expressed by Tom O Leary at [Pick The Brain](#):

"There was, and still is, an Australian Prime Minister who refused to say sorry to the Australian Aboriginal people for crimes against them in the past. This isn't a political article so I won't go into details, but it appears the main reason that he wouldn't publicly apologize on behalf of our country was that he was afraid of the *backlash*. He feared an apology would mean *admitting guilt* and that this would *fuel* the disturbance rather than *remedy* it.

This sort of attitude is all too prevalent in our society. We no longer trust each other. We realize that *if we apologize, we're admitting guilt*. If we admit guilt *it can be used against us*. This may be true in a legal sense — I have held car insurance policies that

National Relationships Repair Month

are void if I admit guilt or apologize at the scene of a potential accident — but it is totally wrong in a relational sense.

We have to get past the paranoia that makes us believe that everyone will try to use an apology against us. There will be times when an apology is abused, but more often than not, *a genuine apology will be well received* and will go a long way towards solving a disturbance between two people.”

Are you ready to give it a try?

What else have you got to lose?

National Relationships Repair Month

How to Apologize

Apologizing is the hardest thing we have to do in a relationship, especially when our partner is obviously hurt, but we aren't 100% sure we were in the wrong. However, learning to accept that your actions have unintended consequences is just as important as accepting that you make mistakes. You need to learn how to apologize for both - otherwise, the inevitable times that you hurt each other as a couple will never be healed, and the rift between you will continue to get worse.

Here is a very good outline about how to apologize. Although it is geared toward telling men how to apologize to women, the basic elements are still the same for any apology, no matter your gender or the gender of the person you're apologizing to. As you read, keep in mind the above principle that causing someone pain, whether you intended to or not, is still something you need to apologize for. In this way, trust in each other and respect for one another's feelings can grow.

From [*Psychology Today*](#):

“There are six elements of a proper apology. If you do not want to waste your time you must include all six:

1. Acknowledge the Wrongful Act

You need to begin by saying ‘I was wrong and I am sorry.’ There are no substitutes for this admission. If you say something dumb like ‘I am sorry that you think I was wrong,’ you might as well spare yourself and not bother. There is no getting around it. You were wrong so plead guilty and get on with it.

2. Acknowledge that You Have Hurt her Feelings.

Understand that your wrongful act has hurt her feelings and made her feel disconnected from you. You cannot reconnect without attending to the feelings piece. So you say ‘I was wrong and I am sorry that I have hurt your feelings.’ Once again, you cannot wimp out by fudging and saying ‘I am sorry that your feelings are hurt.’ You have to connect your wrongful act to her hurt feelings.

3. Express Your Remorse

An expression of remorse and regret is the way you demonstrate your ability to feel an appropriate response to her hurt feelings. So you say, ‘I was wrong and I am sorry that I hurt your feelings and I feel terrible that I have done something that has hurt you.’ (It will help here if you actually look remorseful.)

4. State Your Intention Not to Repeat

National Relationships Repair Month

This may be difficult particularly if you are a repeat offender but it is an expression of your acknowledgement of your need to reform. 'I know that I am sometimes insensitive to what you need but I am going to try my hardest not to do it again.' If you smirk at this juncture you're going to have to go back and start all over.

5. Offer to Make Amends

If you don't know what would help, ask her. 'What can I do to make it up to you?' The particular act of contrition may be negotiated but the important thing is to express your willingness to do something by way of compensation. Of course, once you commit to do something you need to do it lest you render the entire effort useless.

6. Seek Forgiveness

Forgiving is an act that liberates the forgiver from anger so seeking forgiveness is not as self-serving as you may think. A simple 'will you forgive me?' will usually suffice but if you want to avoid appearing presumptuous, or if your offense was particularly odious, you might want to first ask 'can you forgive me?'

As you get better at it you will feel more comfortable creating your own sequence of the elements and adding those embellishments that mark your apologies with your own stamp of individuality. Master this simple skill and you will find your domestic life ever more peaceful."

National Relationships Repair Month

And just to help you along, here are give more tips from Tom O Leary at [Pick the Brain](#):

1. Make it genuine – Anyone can spot a false apology and it will do more harm than good. A genuine apology is aimed solely at taking responsibility and overcoming a disturbance. There are no hidden obligations or expectations attached.

2. Don't justify your actions – If you are busy explaining why you did what you did, it will start to sound like you aren't apologizing at all, that you aren't ready to take responsibility. A brief explanation may help understanding, while a justification may just fuel the disturbance.

3. Make a commitment to change – If you can't confirm that you mean to improve, then you aren't committed to an apology. If you aren't committed to changing your habit of getting home late, don't say "Sorry I am home late". This will be a hollow and ineffective apology. You are better off thanking the other person, "Thanks for putting up with me coming home so late. I appreciate it" and taking it from there.

4. Phrase your apology carefully – Make sure the other person knows why you are apologizing. "I was passing by so I thought I'd drop in and say sorry" is a lot different to "I wanted to come and apologize because I really do care about this relationship". Don't fake it. If you have a good reason to keep the relationship alive the other person will want to hear it.

5. Be prepared for an awkward conclusion – While sometimes an apology is followed straight away by a counter apology and peace and flowers and little birds carrying banners of love through the air, not everyone reacts this way. Some people will behave indifferently, some will behave coldly, and some will react in a downright hostile way. This is out of your control. You have made the step to apologize. Doing it in a productive way is the best you can do. Maybe the other person will appreciate it now, later, or never. No matter what, you have done your bit and you can relax. The rest is up to them."

From these articles, you can see that apologizing is much more complicated than throwing your partner a bone with a short "Sorry"!

Now, ask yourself:

Who do you need to apologize to today?

National Relationships Repair Month

How Apologizing Gives You Emotional Integrity

Apologies, and a trading back and forth of acceptance and forgiveness, are the core of a healthy relationship. Very strong bonds are formed when people trust one another to say “I was wrong,” and move on.

When it comes to responsibility and doing your part in the relationship, apologizing is **essential**. In a relationship, we each want to know that we can rely on our partner to be there when we need them, keep their promises, do what they said they were going to do around the house, etc.

When you fail to meet that obligation to **be a responsible adult partner**, apologizing correctly helps the marriage grow even stronger. A correct apology has first an acceptance of responsibility (“Yes, I did promise to pay the bills this month...”) followed by a personal apology (“I acknowledge that I didn’t do as promised, and now we have some consequences because I forgot...I’m sorry about it”).

Partners who desire a healthy relationship want to see behavior that is rooted in reality, so a let-down partner is waiting for the apology to include: a description of the frustrating behavior; a bit about the damage done, or of its consequences; and a show of empathy for the impact of those consequences on you (“I see now that because I forgot, you need to take time out of your schedule to write the checks I didn’t do...”).

Is it too much to expect that you realize when your behavior has a negative impact on your relationship? Of course not! This is what grown ups do!

Owning a negative piece of your behavior is what integrity is all about: you accept that this behavior is yours, that it has an impact and that you are responsible for the impact of it on other people. No denial, no excuses, no angry responses!

In this way, being able to trust each other requires being able to complete a real and sincere apology.

Still, you may be wondering what you’re “giving up” when you apologize to your partner. Gary Chapman, in his book *The Five Languages of Apology*, makes it clear how what you’re “giving up” (your so-called pride) is really what you’re gaining (integrity).

From [*The Five Languages of Apology*](#):

National Relationships Repair Month

“As you get more in touch with your feelings, you can learn to deal appropriately with things that upset you. You don't have to be afraid of feelings. Feelings are only feelings. They come and go. The best thing to do with uncomfortable feelings is to just watch them and then learn from them.

As you release your need to only see things in the way that you have seen them before, you open up new possibilities and adventures in your life.

As you let go of your need to control others, you have more energy to spend on things that are really important. Life is more fun when you no longer are in charge of making things right in the world!

As you develop your intuitive, creative side, you complement your rational side making you a full functioning human being.

As you relinquish self-centeredness and look to the needs of those around you, you develop intimacy and connectedness.

As you dismiss the belief of "I have to be needed to be safe through strict, rigid thinking", you have more self-understanding.

As you let go of your need to be right, you find you have more of a Self. You become more secure and are less upset when things don't go the way you want. Life becomes less threatening. You see things in new and different ways. You become happier.

For those who listen for “Expressing Regret” apologies, a simple “I’m sorry” is all they look for. There is no need for explanation or “pay back” provided the apology has truly come from the heart.

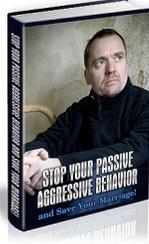
“Expressing Regret” is a powerful Apology Language because it gets right to the point. It doesn't make excuses or attempt to deflect blame. Above all, “Expressing Regret” takes ownership of the wrong. For that reason, “Expressing Regret” is understood as a sincere commitment to repair and rebuild the relationship.

The “Expressing Regret” Apology Language speaks most clearly when the person offering the apology reflects sincerity not only verbally, but also through body language. Unflinching eye contact and a gentle, but firm touch are two ways that body language can underscore sincerity.”

To learn more about this Apology Language, take a good look at Gary Chapman's book, [*The Five Languages of Apology*](#).

National Relationships Repair Month

Also From Creative Conflicts



["Stop Your Passive Aggressive Behaviour":
A Solution Just for Passive Aggressive Men!](#)



["The Tao of Anger":
How to manage anger in your relationships.](#)



["Turn Conflicts Into Love":
Handle conflict wisely and watch your love grow.](#)



["Boosting your Self-Esteem": The Source Of Your Life Energy!](#)



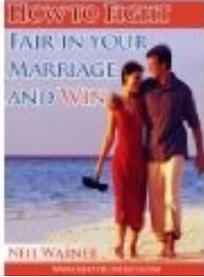
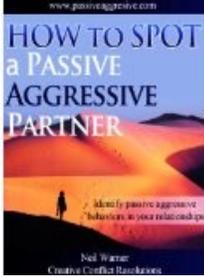
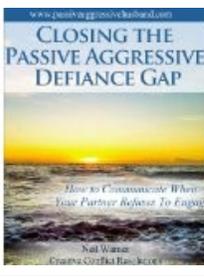
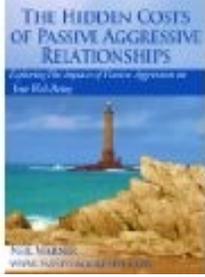
["Healing Emotional Abuse":
How to heal after emotional abuse.](#)



["Recovering from Passive Aggression":
How to heal after a passive aggressive relationship.](#)

National Relationships Repair Month

Now on Amazon Kindle

			
<u>How to Fight Fair in Your Marriage and Win</u>	<u>How To Spot a Passive Aggressive Partner</u>	<u>Closing the Passive Aggressive Defiance Gap</u>	<u>The Hidden Costs of Passive Aggressive Relationships</u>