

**SAFE SPACE**  
**RADIO**  
TIPS & STRATEGIES  
Apologies

**If you need to apologize...**

- Take time to really imagine how it would feel to the person you hurt. Make sure you sincerely feel sorry about the pain you caused them.
- Name what you did to the person you hurt. Focus on your own behavior. Journalist Danielle Berrin calls this “specifying the sin.”
- Let them know that you know it was wrong. Validate their feelings.
- Own it. Don’t blame the hurt party, and avoid words that make excuses like “but” or “if.” As Harriet Lerner says, “keep your *but* out of your apology.”
- Keep “anything” out of your apology, e.g. “I’m sorry for anything I did that upset you.” This subtly disowns the specifics of what you did, and may worsen the injury. Rather, spell it out. List each part of your actions that were hurtful.
- Don’t ask the other person for anything, including forgiveness.
- Listen. Their pain is the priority. Ask them to tell you how they feel.
- Express your determination to do better, that it won’t happen again. Say, “One thing I’ve already learned from this is...”
- Offer to make restitution. Ask, “What can I do to make this better?”
- One conversation might not fix everything, and that’s okay. Let the other person know you’re available to keep talking about it in the future.

**Things to keep in mind...**

- We all do things we regret. Remember that one bad decision doesn’t define you or make you a bad person.
- Even when we hurt someone unintentionally, we’re still responsible. Focus on the impact it had on the hurt party, not on your good intentions.

**Get creative with it!**

- Think about ways you might apologize to yourself. What parts of yourself have you been ignoring or shutting away?
- Consider how an apology is an opportunity to help both the person we hurt, and ourselves feel reconnected with our humanity.
- Do you have a story about an apology that went really well (or not)? Tell us about it! Leave us a voicemail at (617) 600-8419.

“I don’t think there’s ever a way to apologize perfectly. Try to do it in like a good tone of voice. Don’t be like, “ugh, I’m sorry.” Say something nice. Like “I’m really sorry and I feel really bad about it.”

–Chloe Koloski, 5<sup>th</sup> Grader