

SAFE SPACE
RADIO
TIPS & STRATEGIES
Apologies

If you need to apologize...

- Before you do, take time to really imagine how it feels 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 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.”
- 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, 5th Grader