

How to Make an Effective Apology

A sincere apology is a powerful tool for restoring trust and beginning the reconciliation process. Sometimes even the most well-intentioned of apologies can aggravate a conflict and make things worse. Here are some tips that you may want to consider in a statement of apology that can help make it effective and constructive.

These are some of the most common aspects of an effective apology:

1. A explanation of the nature of the situation or perceived offensive behavior (*Example:* "Yesterday on the telephone, I said....")
2. Acceptance of responsibility or being accountable on the part of the person who exhibited the offensive behavior
(*Example:* "I used a poor choice of words." "I spoke without thinking.")
3. An acknowledgement of the pain and embarrassment that the offensive behavior caused
(*Example:* "I can see why you were upsetting." "If someone had said that to me, I would have been upset also.")
4. A opinion about the offensive behavior (*Example:* "I was insensitive." "What I did was wrong.")
5. A statement or sign of regret (*Example:* "I'm sorry I used those words." "I apologize for what I said.")
6. An explanation of future intentions (*Example:* "From now on, I will think about my comments before I make them.")

I may also be helpful to include an explanation of why you acted or behaved the way they did, if you decide to do this it is very important not to restate the offensive comments or action or to make dismissive excuses or defensive justifications.

Example: "I made some inappropriate comments." But not, "I know how it is, when you get mad you speak your mind and some people are just too sensitive."

You should also consider the circumstances of how the apology is made. Some individuals many want a written apology. Some individuals want an opportunity to explain how deeply they were hurt or embarrassment directly to you. Others may want the opportunity to have a face-to-face apology, to shake hands or to discuss future steps to improve relationship. Still some others many want an acknowledgement that the apology was, or that they have been forgiven.