

Summary of The Five Languages of Apology

1. Expressing Regret

“Expressing Regret” is the Apology Language that zeroes in on emotional hurt. It is an admission of guilt and shame for causing pain to another person.

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.

2. Accept Responsibility

It is very difficult for some people to admit that they’re wrong. It makes them doubt their self-worth, and no one likes to be portrayed as a failure. However, as adults, we must all admit that we are sinners and that we will make mistakes. We are going to make poor decisions that hurt our mates, and we are going to have to admit that we were wrong. We have to accept responsibility for our own failures.

For many individuals, all they want is to hear the words, “I am wrong.” If the apology neglects accepting responsibility for their actions, many partners will not feel as though the apology was meaningful and sincere. Many partners need to learn how to overcome their ego, the desire to not be viewed as a failure, and simply admit that their actions were wrong. For a mate who speaks this apology language, if an apology does not admit fault, it is not worth hearing. Being sincere in your apology means allowing yourself to be weak, and admitting that you make mistakes. Though this may be hard to do for some people, it makes a world of a difference to your partner who speaks this language.

3. Make Restitution

In our society, many people believe that wrong acts demand justice. The one who commits the crime should pay for their wrongdoing. A mate who speaks this love language feels the same way towards apologies. They believe that in order to be sincere, the person who is apologizing should justify their actions. The mate who’s been hurt simply wants to hear that their mate still loves them.

There are many effective ways to demonstrate sincerity in an apology. Each mate must learn the other’s love language in order to complete the act of restitution. Though some mates may feel a touch all is forgotten with a bouquet of flowers, that may not necessarily work for all mates. Every mate should uncover what their partner’s main love language is (Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Acts of Service, Physical Touch, and Receiving Gifts) and use that specific language in order to make restitutions in the most effective way.

For a mate whose primary apology language is making restitutions, no matter how often you say “I’m sorry”, or “I was wrong”, your mate will never find the apology sincere. You must show strong efforts for making amends. A genuine apology will be accompanied by the assurance that you still love your mate and have a desire to right the wrong-doings committed.

4. Genuinely Repent

For some individuals, repentance is the convincing factor in an apology. Some mates will doubt the sincerity of an apology if it is not accompanied by their partner's desire to modify their behavior to avoid the situation in the future.

It's important to remember that all true repentance begins in the heart. A mate must feel poorly for hurting their loved one, and rely on God's help in order to truly change. Admitting you are wrong creates vulnerability. It allows your mate to get a glimpse of your heart. The glimpse of true self is assurance that the apology was sincere.

One important aspect of genuinely repenting is verbalizing your desire to change. Your mate cannot read your mind. Though you may be trying to change inside, if you do not verbalize your desire to change to your mate, most likely they will still be hurt.

Many people have problems with repenting when they do not feel as though their actions were morally wrong. However, in a healthy relationship, we often make changes that have nothing to do with morality and everything to do with building a harmonious marriage.

It is also important to make a dedicated plan for change. Often apologies involving repentance fail because the person never set up steps of action to help ensure success. A person must first set goals for their change. After you create realistic goals, then you can start implementing a plan to change. Taking baby steps towards repentance instead of insisting on changing all at once will increase your chances of successfully changing your ways.

It is important to remember that change is hard. Constructive change does not mean we will immediately be successful. There will be highs and lows on the road to change. You must remember that with God's help, anyone can change their ways if they are truly and genuinely ready to repent.

5. Request Forgiveness

In some relationships, a mate wants to hear their partner physically ask for forgiveness. They want assurance that their mate recognizes the need for forgiveness. By asking forgiveness for their actions, a partner is really asking their mate to still love them. Requesting forgiveness assures your mate that you want to see the relationship fully restored. It also proves to your mate that you are sincerely sorry for what you've done. It shows that you realize you've done something wrong. Requesting forgiveness also shows that you are willing to put the future of the relationship in the hands of the offended mate. You are leaving the final decision up to your partner – to forgive or not forgive.

Requesting forgiveness is not easy. It often leaves one vulnerable to the fear of rejection. Along with the fear of rejection is the fear of failing. Many people have a hard time seeking forgiveness because it means admitting that you have failed. The only way to overcome this fear is to recognize that it is very common amongst mankind. The commonality makes it okay to be a failure. It allows a stubborn mate to apologize to their partner and become a healthy individual.

Ultimately, it's important to remember that there is a difference between asking for forgiveness and DEMANDING forgiveness. When we demand forgiveness, we tend to forget the nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice the offended party is supposed to make. Demanding forgiveness takes away the sincerity of asking for it.

Remember not to treat forgiveness lightly. It is something to be cherished and appreciated. The act of forgiveness is hard on both ends – for the person who's asking and for the person who's accepting.