

The Five Languages of Apology

How to Experience Healing in All Your Relationships by Dr. Gary Chapman and Dr. Jennifer Thomas

1. EXPRESSING REGRET “I am sorry”
2. ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY “I was wrong”
3. MAKING RESTITUTION “What can I do to make it right?”
4. GENUINELY REPENTING “I’ll try not to do that again”
5. REQUESTING FORGIVENESS “Will you please forgive me?”

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.

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.

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 though 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.

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.

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.



APOLOGY LANGUAGES PERSONAL PROFILE



LANGUAGES
OF APOLOGY

The **5** Love
Languages[®]

To Get Started:

Some of the possible responses to each of the 20 scenarios are similar. Focus less on their similarity and more on choosing the response that most appeals to you, and then move on to the next item. Allow 10 to 15 minutes to complete the profile. Take it when you are relaxed, and try not to rush through it. When you have completed all 20, add up the number of each letter from A- E and put results in the appropriate blank at the end of the profile.

1 Your spouse failed to acknowledge your wedding anniversary. (If you are not married, assume you are in this scenario.) He/she should say:

- A "I can't believe I forgot. You and our marriage are so important to me. I am so sorry."
- B "There is no excuse for me forgetting. What was I thinking?"
- C "What can I do to prove my love for you?"
- D "You can bet I won't forget next year! I'm going to circle the date on my calendar!"
- E "I know you are hurt, but can you ever forgive me?"

2 Your mother knew how you felt about a matter and knowingly went against your wishes. She should say:

- A "I knew how you felt but went against your wishes anyway. I wish I had not done that."
- B "If I had only thought about what I was doing, I would have realized it was wrong."
- C "What can I do to regain your respect?"
- D "I won't take your feelings for granted in the future."
- E "Will you please give me another chance?"

3 You were in a crisis and needed help, but your friend ignored your need. He/she should say:

- A "I should have been there for you. I'm so sorry I let you down."
- B "I let you down when you needed me the most. I made a terrible mistake."
- C "Saying 'I'm sorry' doesn't feel like it is enough. What more can I say or do to mend our friendship?"
- D "I realize now that I could have been more help to you, and I promise that I'll do everything I can do to help you if ever you are in trouble again."
- E "I am sincerely sorry and ask you to forgive me."

4 Your sister made an insensitive remark about you. She should say:

- A "That was so thoughtless of me. I wish I had been more considerate of your feelings."
- B "I know what I said was wrong and that I hurt your feelings."
- C "Would you allow me to retract what I said? I would like a chance to restore your reputation."
- D "While I will likely say wrong things again in the future, what I've learned from this experience will help me avoid hurting you with insensitive comments."
- E "I blew it! Can you forgive me?"

5 Your spouse lashed out in anger against you when you had done no apparent wrong. He/she should say:

- A "I wish I had not hurt you by yelling at you. I feel so bad for how I treated you."
- B "I was angry, but I had no right to speak to you that way. You did not deserve that."
- C "What can I do or say to make things right between us?"
- D "I'm afraid that I'll do this again, and I don't want to. Help me think of ways to avoid blowing up like this in the future."
- E "I am truly sorry for yelling at you. I hope that you can find it in your heart to forgive me."

6 You were proud of your accomplishment, but your friend acted as if it was trivial. He/she should say:

- A "You needed me to share your excitement, and I let you down. I hate that I didn't respond more appropriately."
- B "I spoiled your celebration by not being happy for you. I could make excuses, but really, I have no good excuse for ignoring your achievement."
- C "Is it too late for us to celebrate your accomplishment? I really want to make this up to you."
- D "I promise I'll notice and celebrate your accomplishments in the future. I've learned a hard lesson."
- E "I know I failed you before, but will you please forgive me again?"

NEXT



7

Your business partner failed to consult with you on an important matter of mutual interest. He/she should say:

- A "I know now that I hurt you very badly. I am truly sorry for what I did."
- B "I really blew it this time. I was wrong to not include you in this decision. You have a right to be upset with me."
- C "Is there anything I can do to make up for what I did?"
- D "In the future, I plan to consult with you no matter what. I won't bypass you in making decisions again."
- E "You have every right to hold this against me, but will you please forgive me?"

8

A coworker unintentionally poked fun at you and embarrassed you in front of others in your workplace. He/she should say:

- A "I deeply regret embarrassing you like I did. I wish I could go back in time and say something more appropriate."
- B "That was so thoughtless of me. I thought I was being funny, but obviously, hurting you like I have is not funny."
- C "Is there any way I can repair our relationship? Would you like for me to apologize to you in front of the staff?"
- D "It's easy to take others' feelings for granted, but I want to be more considerate of you and others in the future. Will you help hold me accountable?"
- E "I didn't intend to hurt you, and now all I can do is ask for your forgiveness and try not to repeat my same mistake again."

9

You were trying to tell your friend something important, and he/she acted disinterested. He/she should say:

- A "I feel really bad that I didn't listen to what you were saying. I know how it feels to have something important to say, and I regret that I didn't listen to you."
- B "Listening is such an important part of a strong relationship, but once again, I blew it. You needed me to hear you, and I basically just ignored your need."
- C "Can we back up and try again? You talk, and I'll listen. You'll have my undivided attention."
- D "I messed up this time, but in the future, I promise to give you my full attention when you say you have something important to tell me."
- E "I'm sorry I wasn't listening. You don't have to forgive me, but I hope you will."

10

Your brother learned that he had previously been wrong about a significant point of conflict between the two of you. He should say:

- A "I am upset with myself over how I handled our disagreement. My behavior threatened our relationship and that scares me. I regret the way I acted."
- B "I admit that I was wrong. If I had only known then what I know now, I could have saved us a lot of heartache."
- C "What can I do to mend our relationship? I feel like I need to do or say something to restore your respect for me."
- D "If we disagree over an issue in the future, I plan on gathering all the facts before I make any judgments. That may save us from unnecessary arguing."
- E "I apologize. Will you please forgive me?"

11

Although you had expressed your annoyance with a particular habit many times before, your spouse continued exhibiting the behavior to spite you. He/she should say:

- A "I've taken this too far. I'm very sorry for not being more considerate of your wishes. I wouldn't like it if you did that to me."
- B "OK, I admit it; I am annoying you on purpose, and that's neither funny nor fair. I need to act more mature than that."
- C "Saying 'I'm sorry' won't take back the fact that I've knowingly tried to annoy you. What more can I do to win back your favor?"
- D "I have gotten into the habit of disregarding your wishes, and I don't want to go on doing that. From now on, I'm going to make extra effort to honor your wishes."
- E "I've tried your patience, and now I'm asking you to forgive me. Will you allow me a fresh start in honoring your requests?"

12

Your father gave you the "silent treatment" as a way of making you feel guilty about something on which the two of you disagreed. He should say:

- A "You are an adult, and I feel really bad about controlling your decisions. I don't want to risk damaging our relationship."
- B "There is no denying that I'm guilty. I should have handled the situation with more fairness and honesty."
- C "I would like to make this up to you somehow, and I want to keep talking with you. May I take you out to dinner?"
- D "In the future, I'm going to be more honest about how I feel without trying to make you feel guilty for not agreeing with me."
- E "It's your choice, but I really do hope you will forgive me."

NEXT



13

A business associate broke a promise and caused you to miss an important deadline. He/she should say:

- A** "I am so sorry. I promised you I'd come through, and I not only let you down but caused you to miss your deadline. I know this jeopardizes your work and our partnership."
- B** "I've really messed up this time. You missed your deadline because of me."
- C** "I don't know what I can do at this point, but is there any way I can compensate you for my part in your missed deadline?"
- D** "It's too late to do anything about it now, but I want so badly to avoid this type of error again. Let's talk about what I can do in the future to make good on my promises."
- E** "I don't expect you to forgive me considering the trouble I've caused you, but I would greatly appreciate it if you would forgive me."

14

Your neighbor asked you to wait on him/her outside the arena, but he/she never showed up for the concert. He/she should say:

- A** "I'm so sorry you had to stand there waiting on me. You are important to me, and I should have honored you and your time by being there when I said I would be."
- B** "You stood there waiting on me, thinking I would show up at any moment, and I let you down. If I had only managed my time differently, I would have been there. That is totally my fault."
- C** "Let's go to another concert, and this time, I'm paying for your ticket as a way of apologizing for standing you up last time."
- D** "In the future, I will manage my time and prioritize my schedule so that I tend to our friendship like I should."
- E** "Our friendship really is important, and I hope you won't give up on me. Will you forgive me for standing you up?"

15

A friend's child broke one of your prized possessions while visiting in your home. Your friend should say:

- A** "I know this was one of your prized possessions, and I feel terrible about what has happened."
- B** "I should have been watching my child more closely. It was my fault for not paying more attention to what was going on. If I had just done a couple of things differently, this would not have happened."
- C** "May I pay you for this special item, or can I purchase it somewhere for you? Is there some way I can replace this?"
- D** "I promise that I will be more protective of your possessions in the future and will not allow my child to play in 'off limits' areas when we're in your home."
- E** "You have a right to be upset, but I hope that you can forgive me and remain my friend despite your disappointment."

16

A church member blamed you with sole responsibility for the failure of a committee project although he/she shared leadership duties of the committee. He/she should say:

- A** "I can't believe I blamed you like I did. I really am embarrassed about my behavior, and I'm sorry."
- B** "I had just as much to do with the failure of this project as you or anyone else. I should have admitted my shortcomings."
- C** "There is no excuse for my behavior, and the only way I'm going to feel remotely better is to make this right between us. What do you need me to do or say?"
- D** "I'm either going to learn how to treat my team members more appropriately, or I'm not going to lead any more committees. I want to grow from this experience."
- E** "Please forgive me. I was wrong to blame you, and I pray that you will forgive me."

17

Despite his/her promise to keep your secret, your coworker broke your trust in him/her by telling others in the office. He/she should say:

- A** "If only I had thought about how much damage I was doing by telling your secret. I feel so bad for not having taken my promise more seriously."
- B** "I told you I would keep your secret, and I broke my promise and damaged your trust in me. I made a terrible mistake."
- C** "Help me know what I should do to restore your trust in me."
- D** "It may take you some time to rebuild your trust in me, but I'll be working hard from now on to prove that I am trustworthy."
- E** "You don't have to answer immediately, but will you consider forgiving me for making this mistake?"

18

Your teammate spoke negatively about you to others on the team. He/she should say:

- A** "What I said was mean and unkind. I regret what I said, and I wish that I could take it back."
- B** "I had a bad attitude and didn't once think about your positive attributes. I should have thought more about what I was saying."
- C** "I want to do anything I can to correct my mistake. Shall I apologize in front of the team?"
- D** "If I am ever again upset with you, I promise to gather my thoughts and approach you directly and respectfully."
- E** "You may not be able to forgive me, at least not now, but I hope you can forgive me someday."

NEXT



APOLOGY LANGUAGES PERSONAL PROFILE



LANGUAGES OF APOLOGY

19

Despite your having several positive accomplishments, your supervisor only criticized your performance. He/she should say:

- A "I am so sorry that I focused on the minor flaws of your performance. I regret that I didn't encourage you more."
- B "I neglected to compliment you on the many strengths of your performance, and you may have felt that all your practice was for nothing. As your supervisor, I should be more forthcoming with praise for all the good work that you do."
- C "How can I earn your forgiveness? Shall I write down the strengths of your performance?"
- D "You deserve recognition for your hard work. I will try to be more balanced next time."
- E "I hope this won't damage our relationship. Will you accept my apology?"

20

At lunch, your server dropped food on you and ruined your shirt. He/she should say:

- A "I am so sorry about that. I feel bad that I've ruined your shirt and inconvenienced you like this."
- B "I am normally pretty careful, but I wasn't careful enough this time. I accept full responsibility for this mess."
- C "I would like to reimburse you for your dry cleaning or for the cost of a new shirt. What seems most appropriate to you?"
- D "This has taught me a hard lesson. You can bet that I'll be even more careful in the future when serving guests."
- E "Can you please forgive me for my carelessness?"

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RESULTS

- A: _____ EXPRESSING REGRET
- B: _____ ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY
- C: _____ MAKING RESTITUTION
- D: _____ GENUINELY REPENTING
- E: _____ REQUESTING FORGIVENESS

Obviously, the highest score possible for any of the individual languages is 20. If you scored the same amount of points for two or more languages, then you may feel equally receptive to two or more of the apology languages.

Would you like an email copy of your results?

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