

Counselor's Corner - Mrs. Miller

January 2022 - Smoketree Elementary



It's a new year! Let's start off the new year on good footing. Sometimes we mess up and need to say "sorry" to another person. It is very powerful when adults apologize to kids. It might sound easy, but to offer a sincere apology, it takes several steps. I teach the children the Apology and Forgiveness Tool.

The tag line for this tool is:

"I admit my mistakes and work to forgive yours."



The symbol for this tool is glue - which can sometimes help us fix things.

Apologize for the Right Reason

The right intention can make all the difference in an apology. There is really only one correct reason for apologizing to someone, which is that **you feel genuine remorse for hurting them in some way**. Don't force another person to apologize. When it is not sincere, a forced apology can actually make the situation worse.

Describe What You're Apologizing For

What people typically want from an apology is validation and recognition. When you victimize someone, you're implying that their needs don't matter. One way you can make up for that is to demonstrate some understanding of why your actions hurt them. Briefly describe what you did and why it hurt them. For example, you might say something like, "I'm sorry I didn't cook your favorite meal as I had promised. I realize it may have felt like I forgot about you or that I just didn't care." Your description should demonstrate both awareness and empathy.

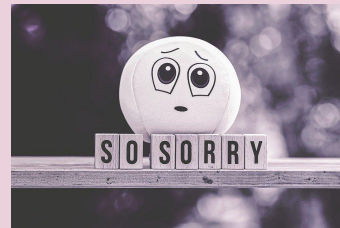
Explicitly Apologize

It's important to actually say the words "I'm sorry" or "I apologize." We often cave under the pressure of sincere communication. Sometimes the person who deserves an apology and really wants to hear it will even let you off the hook without an explicit apology if you make your intention clear. However, apologies aren't supposed to be easy- so make sure you say the actual words. But just saying "I'm sorry" is not enough, as stated above, be sure to describe to the person what your mistake was.

Ask for Forgiveness

When you've apologized and given your assurances, ask forgiveness. Explicitly say, "Will you forgive me?" When you victimize someone, you take something away and asking for forgiveness is a way of giving a little bit back. You're letting them know that you need something from them and they can decide to give it to you or not. In other words, you're allowing yourself to be vulnerable as a way of evening the score.

*** VERY IMPORTANT*** The catch is that you can't make them forgive you. You have to live with whatever they decide to do. They may also not be able to forgive you right away. Be patient, they may change their mind if you show genuine signs of change. This goes both ways, if someone apologizes to you for a mistake, you choose to forgive on your timeline.



Don't Ruin It With Explanations

It's hard to admit you were wrong and leave it at that. Whatever it was that you did, you know there were specific circumstances, that you're not really such a bad person, and so on. You want to defend your actions in such a way that you don't feel terrible about yourself. However, an apology isn't about you; it's about them. We all know that nothing happens in a vacuum and there were extenuating circumstances and everything else but all they care about is that you hurt them. So make your apology and resist the urge to add a "but" or "it's just that" to the end.



Don't Force an Apology on Someone

Finally, don't force an apology on someone who doesn't want it. An apology is for making the other person feel better, not for making you feel better. If someone doesn't want to hear from you, respect that.

Apologies are never easy but they're often the right thing to do. The key is to express genuine remorse while being specific about your offense and how it affected the other person. Taking responsibility for your actions shows a fundamental change in attitude from addictive behavior and making some assurance it won't happen again sets the groundwork for rebuilding trust.

<https://www.enlightenedsolutions.com/8-tips-for-making-a-good-apology/>

REMEMBER: Just like anything we do where we want to get better, keep practicing!!