

Lazare's Model for an Effective Apology

There are up to four elements to an effective apology.

Not every apology requires all four parts. They are as follows.

1. A valid acknowledgment of the offense that makes clear who the offender is and who is the offended. The offender must clearly and completely acknowledge the offense.
2. An effective explanation, which shows an offense was neither intentional nor personal, and is unlikely to recur.
3. Expressions of remorse, shame, and humility, which show that the offender recognizes the suffering of the offended.
4. A reparation of some kind, in the form of a real or symbolic compensation for the offender's transgression.

An effective apology must also satisfy at least one of seven psychological needs of an offended person:

1. The restoration of dignity in the offended person.
2. The affirmation that both parties have shared values and agree that the harm committed was wrong.
3. Validation that the victim was not responsible for the offense.
4. The assurance that the offended party is safe from a repeat offense.
5. Reparative justice, which occurs when the offended sees the offending party suffer through some type of punishment.
6. Reparation, when the victim receives some form of compensation for his pain.
7. A dialogue that allows the offended parties to express their feelings toward the offenders and even grieve over their losses.

Apology:

I'm sorry I snapped at you during dinner preparations. I'm frustrated with my boss at work and regrettably, I expressed some of that frustration toward you, which you didn't deserve and that's not fair. I'm really sorry I hurt you because you're a cherished companion and I really appreciate all that you do to enrich our lives including meal preparation. How can I make it up to you?

Apology with Commentary:

I'm sorry I (offender) snapped at you (offended) during dinner preparations. I'm frustrated with my boss at work and regrettably, I expressed some of that frustration toward you (explanation), which you didn't deserve (offended not responsible) and that's not fair (shared values). I'm really sorry (expression of remorse) I hurt you (recognizes the suffering of the offended) because you're a cherished companion (restores the dignity of the offended person) and I really appreciate all that you do to enrich our lives including meal preparation (shared values, possible reparation). How can I make it up to you (alternative attempt at reparation)?

Source: Making Peace Through Apology By Aaron Lazare: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/making_peace_through_apology