

## Learn to Apologize

Made a mistake? We all do! Especially when we have had a pattern of overreacting to others' behaviors in unkind ways, trust can be restored as we take responsibility for our behavior. Apologize for your behavior and let people know that we intend to make a change, and then make the change! I have been asked repeatedly how to go back and rebuild trust with children once we realize the reactions we used when they were young came from our survival brain. The willingness to sit down and authentically apologize for painful past behavior and tell them how you wished you would have handled the situation is relationship changing.

### Try this:

Go to the person and ask them if they have a moment to receive an apology from you- (if this is not a good time for them, find a time that would work for both of you).

1. Recall the situation and your behavior that you are going to apologize for.
2. Offer a genuine heartfelt apology.
3. Tell them how you wish had handled it, or intend to handle it in the future.
4. Listen to what they need to say. Affirm them. Do not rebut or minimize their experience.
5. Thank them for being willing to hear your apology and then affirm your relationship.

### Examples:

*When you have reflected on a behavior you want to go back and apologize for:*  
Mandy, do you have a moment right now to talk with me? I want to apologize for something I did last week. Remember when I walked into your office last Wednesday and yelled at you to turn down your music? I am sorry to have treated you that way. It was inappropriate, and I can imagine, very uncomfortable for you. In that situation, I wish I would have waited until I was calm and then simply asked you to turn the volume down. I know you were not intending for it to be overly loud. Thank you for listening to this. I appreciate working with you and all the good things we do together.

*If the other person approaches you and tells you about a behavior that requires an apology:*  
Mandy – First I want to thank you for addressing my behavior, because I didn't. I know there is no excuse and that what I did was quite difficult, and I still want to apologize. I was wrong to act that way and I will use better skills in the future. I appreciate working with you and want to be able to work well in the future together.

### Avoid:

- Defending or justifying your behavior
- Demanding or expecting them to forgive you
- Expecting an immediate 'feel-good' response from them. Remember – you are apologizing to make amends, not getting something from them.

### Tips:

- If you are apologizing to children, remember to make it age appropriate.
- If this is new behavior on your part, the other person may feel threatened, be surprised or suspicious about your new efforts. Remember your QTIP, proceed respectfully and authentically and don't react to their initial reaction. As they begin to see your heartfelt commitment to sincere change, they will relax and trust your words.

