

Saying sorry

Saying sorry can be a tricky one. If not done with empathy and meaning it can have massive consequences on relationships. It can inhibit the growing trust between us causing more conflicts. This is because it can be hard to forgive when another has not taken responsibility for their actions. There are probably many intricate reasons for a person who finds it hard to say a sincere apology, for example, we may have come across people who never apologise. Maybe they grew up in a family who never apologised. This tough stance could often show behaviour of high independence and personal pride. Apologising, according to this mindset, may show weakness and vulnerability; once you do, you are in danger of being taken advantage of. Unfortunately, this type of behaviour will only cause a barrier in relationships and prevent us from growing closer.

Someone may say they are sorry, but you might find yourself left feeling empty. You have heard the word, but it feels in some way, not sincere - maybe you've felt humoured or told you are being too sensitive, or it was a joke. It could be that the word 'but' came after the apology, for example, 'I am really sorry but ...' at this moment you might see someone introduce their own trauma as an excuse or a distraction tactic. This is where things get manipulative, it could be that the person knows what they are doing but sometimes not, however, it still does not mean it is okay. The person has reversed the positions by them now being the victim and you as the offender. This tactic is a form of gaslighting.

For others it is more about the situation and that the upset is clearly in the eyes of the beholder, for example, "Did I really do something wrong? Even if you think so, I do not, so there is nothing in my mind to apologise for." Sometimes things can turn into a blaming game, for example, 'Whatever I did was only because of what you did, you're the one at fault here.' Or it could become a power struggle, for example, "I'm not saying sorry until you say sorry!"

Even if your apology seems to put you in a weak position, the other person cannot take advantage of you if you do not let them. Also, more importantly, apologies are not about right and wrong or an argument about which reality is right, but instead about something else - you are taking responsibility for unintentional (or yes, sometimes intentionally) the hurt towards others emotionally or physically and trying to look at the situation from the victim position by having compassion for their reaction. To listen to them followed by saying sorry but also to clarify what it is you are sorry for could help a person know you have recognised it and taken full responsibility for your part. The likelihood is it will defuse and quickly repair the situation. Also, by modelling this good behaviour, it is more likely that the other person will apologise for their part.

If the other person does not accept your apology, it could be time to move on. It is having the self-worth inside ourselves to know we have done enough and to forgive ourselves. We all make mistakes, whether it be intentional or not.

Apologies are about the repair of hurts, wounds, and relationships.