Apologizing the right way
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I thought this was a great article whether for the 9th step or for Yom Kippur or basic shalom, bayit or bein-adam l'chaveiro

From Tablet Mag. (i copied and pasted to avoid having to go to the website and avoid triggers)

How To Say You’re Sorry

By Marjorie Ingall

As Yom Kippur approaches, I’ll share what I’ve learned about how to apologize—and how not to

For two years, purely for my own amusement and education, I’ve co-written a blog called SorryWatch. The site, which I do with my friend and fellow writer Susan McCarthy, applauds good apologies (and analyzes what makes them good) and flings metaphorical monkey poop at bad ones (and examines what makes them terrible). We examine apologies in politics, sports, pop culture, literature, and history, and we look at research on effective and ineffective apologies. Now, as Yom Kippur looms, it seems an opportune time to discuss what I’ve learned about how to say you’re sorry and do it right.

Because, sadly, there are so many epically bad apologies out in the world. Probably the worst we’ve analyzed were by sports figures: Lance Armstrong and Ray Rice (written back in May, before the who-saw-the-inside-the-elevator-tape-and-when scandals erupted). Runner-up: Chris Christie’s eyeball-popping, ultra-defensive post-G.W.-Bridge-closure press conference.

We’ve seen Jews on both the giving and receiving ends of bad apologies. We’ve looked at Henry Ford’s wretched apology to the Jewish community for his anti-Semitic newspaper, Gary Oldman’s wretched apology to the ADL for his anti-Semitic remarks, a German spa’s wretched apology to everyone for its romantic Kristallnacht special on the event’s 75th anniversary, Rupert Murdoch’s wretched apology to no one in particular for inane tweeting about the “Jewish-owned press,” and a young Jewish op-ed writer’s wretched apology to the universe for suggesting that genocide of Palestinians is permissible.

On the more positive side, Susan and I have looked at Emory University's excellent apology for its history of anti-Jewish prejudice at its dental school, Charles Dickens' remorse for his hateful anti-Semitic caricature of Fagin, Kveller's thoughtful apology for running a biased and homophobic essay, and Pharaoh's pretty decent apology to Moses. (Pharaoh was a jerk, but if you restrict yourself to the text, the man gave good sorry.)

My personal interest in apology dates, of course, from having children. I started writing about teaching kids to say they're sorry when I was the East Village Mamele at the Forward. I was a new mom, acutely aware of the moral import of bringing up new humans. I was terrified of raising tiny Ed Geins. So, I did a lot of reading of contradictory parenting articles. It was interesting to learn that some experts don't believe in forced apologies; I discovered that I do. Maybe because Judaism is a religion that's all about how you act, not what you think. I don't care if you're not sorry in your heart; you still have to say it to your sister if you smacked her on the head with a My Little Pony. You can track my own struggles with and questions about children's apologies as my kids got older through my Tablet columns.

Susan and I both read psychiatrist Aaron Lazare's book On Apology, as well as a bunch of legal and medical journal articles about the impact of apologizing. Here, as a public service, I'll take you through what we've learned.

The mechanics of good apologies aren't difficult. The 12th-century sage Maimonides said that true repentance requires humility, remorse, forbearance , and reparation. Not much has changed since then. Basically, you have to take ownership of the offense, even if it makes you uncomfortable. Name your sin, even if it makes you squirm. Use the first person, and avoid passive voice ("I'm sorry I kicked your Pomeranian," not "I'm sorry your dog got hurt," or worse, "I'm sorry it was impossible to ignore the incessant yapping of your undersocialized little hellbeast"). Acknowledge the impact of what you did. ("My lateness was disrespectful of your time and inconvenienced you on what I know was a busy day.") Be real, open and non-defensive. ("What I said was moronic and mean, and I'm ashamed of myself.") Offer a teeny bit of explanation if it's relevant, but keep it short and—this is key—don't use it as justification for your actions. ("I was tired and crabby because I had to work late, but that's no excuse for taking it out on you.")

And when you've said your piece, let the wronged party have their say. If they need to process, process. If they're clipped and abrupt but accept your apology, say, "Thank you." If they remain mad, well, you'll have to sit with that for a while. Maimonides said that if your first apology isn't accepted, you have to try twice more. If after that the person won't forgive you, you're free to stop trying.

Finally, you have to make reparations. Pay for the broken window or the dry cleaning, tell everyone in the office that the error was yours and not your underling's, make a donation to the wronged party's favorite charity, educate yourself if your mistake was an indication of your cluelessness about other cultures, races, or religions. In your heart of hearts, you know what to do to try to make things right. Apologizing well requires both humility and bravery.

Apologizing poorly is a lot easier. Look!

The "Sorry if": Don't be "sorry if" anyone was hurt by your words or actions. Be sorry that you were hurtful. Own it. The "if" adds a shadow of doubt—hey, maybe you didn't say or do anything nasty after all! "If" is cowardly; "that" takes responsibility. Similarly, "it distresses me that you're upset" is weaselly: You're implying that their reaction has caused you grief. A good apology is not about you.

The "Sorry but": "There's a lot going on in my life" and "I was exhausted" diffuse responsibility. They're excuses. Similarly, "that's not who I am" announces that you were possessed by some sort of demon, like Zuul in Ghostbusters. If you said it, is indeed who you are. It's up to you to face that unpleasant part of yourself and work to change it.

The poisoned apology: Susan coined this term for an insult wrapped in an apology, "like a cupcake with mud filling." When you say, "I'm sorry I rolled my eyes and cut you off during the meeting, but you just kept repeating yourself," you're blaming the other person for triggering your bad behavior. "I'm sorry I yelled … but you provoked me," likewise avoids ownership—if they weren't so annoying, you wouldn't have to apologize! It's their fault! "I'm really sorry I tried to help" implies that the other person is a jerk—probably a jerk without self-awareness—for not accepting your kindness. "I'm sorry you misunderstood" hints that the other person is dimwitted. (Be sorry you said something hurtful, not that the other person mistook your meaning.) "I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, but you tend to take everything personally" not only puts the onus on the other person, but also makes their sin a habitual one. You've insulted them twice in one apology! Well done!

The "I was just being funny": You hear this from professional comedians after they insult another race, gender, or group. But regular people do it, too. Saying you're sorry while telling the other person directly or indirectly that she's overreacting or has no sense of humor isn't apologizing.

The extraneous words: Two words that have no place in any apology: “Obviously” and “misconstrued.” Here’s why: The word “obviously” is not a humble word. If you obviously didn’t mean the horrible thing you said, why did you say it? And if something really is obvious—if, say, you obviously didn’t intend to spill red wine all over your friend’s new couch, which I’m sure is true, because you’re not a sociopath—why point out it out? Saying that you obviously are a good person who wouldn’t hurl a fine Merlot hither and yon like a Real Housewife comes off as self-justifying, even if that’s not your goal. The word “misconstrued,” on the other hand, puts the onus on others for failing to see your good intentions. “Misconstrued” means you’re really not at fault. In a good apology, you do not present yourself as the aggrieved party.

The case of the missing nouns: In a lot of public apologies, the politician, celebrity or cretinous CEO never actually says what he did wrong. He apologizes for “what happened” or “the events of last week.” Sometimes the passive voice is favored, as in “unfortunate things were said.” To apologize well, you must name the sin. How else can you show that you understand the harm and won’t repeat it?

The “You are so sensitive!”: Apologizing while telling someone she’s overreacting is like giving her a delicious homemade cookie, then snatching it back and stomping on it.

“Let’s move forward.” Ban this phrase from your apologies. It’s code for “Let’s forget this ever happened.” You have no right to make that request; the person you wronged gets to decide it’s time to move on. The sinner doesn’t have the prerogative to rush the forgiveness process. (And don’t you dare say, “I’m paying the price, too”—that says you feel you’ve been punished enough. Not your call, babe.)

Bad apologies are cagey, ungenerous, grudging attempts to avoid taking full responsibility for whatever you’re putatively apologizing for. Good apologies are about stepping up. And sometimes that means apologizing even if you feel you’re the wronged party. You know the phrase “shalom bayit,” right? It means peace in the house. Not necessarily your actual physical house, though there’s certainly that. (I’ve apologized to my spouse when I felt he was the one in the wrong, and I’ve apologized to my children for laughing at their fury when, I’m sorry, their fury was kind of funny.)

A good apology means laying yourself bare. (Not in a gross selfie way. Anthony Weiner, keep

your pants on.) It means putting yourself in the other person’s position, giving them what they want and need. In short, it’s not about you. And even though I’ve been analyzing apologies for two years, it’s something I need to keep reminding myself, during the High Holidays and all the time. Sinning is easy; apologizing is hard

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