

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1004 What to do When You Need to Apologize

You said or did something hurtful, or shameful, and you know you should apologize. You think, “Yeah, I know I should, but, well, it’s going to be embarrassing. Isn’t there another way?” I’m Jerry Roberts, let’s unravel this and get the solution, next, on The Extra Point.

All of us have said and done things that have called for an apology. It’s part of the human experience. If you’ve never been guilty of it, then your time is coming.

How do you handle it, and when? Let’s throw some ideas around, and see if we can find some common ground for the topic of apologies.

1. When you realize what you’ve done, that’s the time to apologize. However, I need to add some qualifications to that.
2. If it was just you and one other person who was involved, and nobody else was present as witnesses, then go ahead and apologize.
3. On the other hand, if your offense took place in front of others, then it’s more complicated. What you need to do is to assemble all of the people who saw this dustup go down, and then make the apology.

I had a boss once who wrongly criticized me in front of a whole team. Then, when he realized his mistake, he called me into his office to apologize. The team wasn’t there. It was just him and me. I always thought it was a gutless move, and he did it more than once.

If you rip someone in front of an audience — something a manager should never do anyway — then you apologize with that audience present. It’s how you re-establish trust and credibility.

4. A simple “I’m sorry” is a good start, but it

can’t end there. Just like praise has to be specific to be effective, it’s the same for an apology. Being specific lets the other person know you clearly understand the situation and what you did wrong.

“Mary, I misjudged your work on the project. I can see now that you had a big impact on the results. I appreciate your hard work. In the future, I’ll be more careful. I hope you’ll accept my apology.”

You could also toss in something like, “I sure wish I hadn’t been so quick to judge.” Trust me, if your head is screwed on straight and the sentiment is right, the right words will come.

5. Do not apologize by text or email. Nope, never. This is done in person only.
6. No cheesy, halfway, sort-of apologies. You don’t want to say anything like: “Like, sorry dude, I didn’t know it was going to be such a big deal.” Or, “Golly, I’m sorry, but you shouldn’t be so sensitive.” Or, “Come on, you know that I was just goofing around.” Doing this makes you look dumb and insincere. Not exactly the combination you want.
7. Don’t try to justify your actions during the apology. “Well, I’m sorry but it’s really not my fault.” So, if it’s not your fault, then this is not really an apology?
8. Some people try to extract an apology while giving one. “Well Joe, I’m sorry for what I said, but if we’re being truthful here, you were just as much to blame as I was, wouldn’t you say? I mean, maybe you owe me an apology, too.” All of a sudden, that warmth and love and reconciliation sprung a leak.

(Con’t.)

9. What happens if I don't want to apologize? Maybe you figure it will all blow over and be forgotten, so you say nothing. People won't forget. You'll lose credibility and trust. I've seen it happen, and maybe you have too.

Don't do it. Adding a layer of arrogance to whatever it was that you did in the first place is not a genius move.

My recommendation is to keep things simple. Don't overthink this.

- Express remorse for what you said or did
- Take responsibility
- Do what is needed to make amends
- Say what you'll do to avoid it happening again

No, it's not pleasant to have to go through this, but you'll be fine once it's over. Do it right. You'll be glad you did.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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