

WHAT IT IS

There are numerous times when offering an apology to another person can be a helpful part of a process. Unfortunately, apologies sometimes occur quickly, in a rushed or performative manner, or lack genuine sincerity. Understanding how to apologize well builds trust, demonstrates responsibility, and helps students grow personally and socially throughout their college experience.

WHO TO USE IT WITH

This can be applied to group projects, roommate conflicts, miscommunication, or hurt feelings among friends, as part of a restorative or developmental student conduct or Title IX/VI process, and to address issues of social or cultural sensitivity.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Think back to a time when someone apologized to you for something they did wrong. What were the qualities of that apology that made you feel like they meant it?
2. What are some examples of bad apologies or ways an apology was offered that didn't seem like they really meant it?

TEACHING INSIGHTS

Teaching college students how to apologize effectively is a crucial part of fostering personal growth, accountability, and healthy relationships. A well-crafted apology is sincere, specific, takes responsibility, expresses genuine regret, and demonstrates a commitment to change. Qualities to avoid in an apology include justifying your behavior, minimizing the impact, shifting the responsibility, making a quick and non-specific "I'm sorry, ok?" statement, demanding acceptance and forgiveness from the person wronged after the apology, and failing to change your behavior in the future.

In September of 2022, actor Jonah Hill offered a public apology on the Jimmy Kimmel show for using a racial slur (n-word) in a comedy sketch in 2007. His apology serves as a useful example because he acknowledged the harm caused, expressed genuine regret, and reflected on why the language was unacceptable. By examining examples like this, students can gain a deeper understanding of the components of a meaningful apology and why it is essential to approach mistakes with honesty and humility. The YouTube clip of this apology is found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMz80FKusUA

Senator Joni Ernst made a controversial comment during a discussion on healthcare funding, implying that cuts or changes to healthcare wouldn't significantly change the reality that "everyone dies eventually." After facing criticism for the crassness of this remark, she issued an apology that many perceived as sarcastic or dismissive. Instead of fully acknowledging the insensitivity of her comment or the concerns about healthcare access, her apology seemed to downplay the impact of her words, which sparked further debate about empathy and responsibility in political discourse. The YouTube video of this original statement and summary can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuikbGjH9-o>