

# Making a Sincere Apology

This lesson helps students learn concrete steps to make a sincere apology by showing compassion and using empathy. The lesson gives them an opportunity to role play the steps in a variety of situations.

**Caring Sub-Concept(s)**

Compassion, Kindness

**Lesson Timeframe**

45 minutes

**Required Materials**

- ☐ Read about Rob Lewicki's research on apologies: <https://news.osu.edu/news/2016/04/12/effective-apology/>
- ☐ Kids Health: <http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/sorry.html>

**Standards Map**

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL  
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM  
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.  
See last page for details.

**Trigger warning:** Talking about emotions and situations where strong emotions arise can lead to students revealing personal information that might require follow-up by yourself or a school counselor. If a student reveals any worrisome information or reaction, please know your school protocol for providing support and resources. Before class, find out the school policy about reporting a concern about a student's mental health to a school counselor or administrator.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Identify ways to give a sincere apology.
- Connect the importance and impact of an apology with caring and respect.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Introduce yourself to a new teacher/staff at school today. Remember what it felt like to be new. Friendly faces make it easier.

### Tips for Diverse Learners

- Give students a copy of the four steps to apologize for reference.
- Have students partner with someone who can explain the scenario.
- Have students respond or write in their journals about the scenarios to reinforce learning.



## Share

3-5 minutes

Play “Rose, Thorn, Bud. Go around the room and allow each student to answer the following:

- What is the highlight of your day so far?
- What is something that was a struggle today?
- What is one thing you are looking forward to later on today or this week?

Note: You cannot pass on the positives and only share the negative. Take time to think of your answers. Start them off with your own Rose-Bud-Thorn.

Explain that everyone has struggles and successes. Sometimes our own behavior can actually lead to someone else’s struggle. When that happens, we need to own up to it and show that we care for them by making a sincere apology.



## Inspire

5-7 minutes

Making a sincere apology takes effort and intention. It shows that you care about the other person and you have compassion for them.

Compassion is when you understand how someone else feels and you have a desire to help them feel better. When you are the reason they are struggling, the compassionate choice is a sincere apology.

Everyone makes mistakes - adults, kids, leaders - everyone. Sometimes we immediately feel sorry for our actions or words, sometimes it takes a while, and sometimes we never get there. But when we realize we have done something wrong, it’s important to make amends with the person we’ve wronged.

Today we are going to learn some steps to a sincere apology. Invite students to raise their hands if they have ever received an insincere apology? (For example, someone who just said “Sorry!” but you knew they didn’t mean it?) How did that feel? Invite student response.

Sometimes it is hard to apologize! Why do you think it is hard to say, “I’m sorry” to someone? Invite student response.

If an apology is made too soon, sometimes the person giving the apology isn’t ready to apologize yet. Apologies should be sincere and from the heart.

Write “The 4 Steps to Apologizing” on the board:

1. Realize you did something wrong.
2. Sincerely apologize.
3. Explain yourself.
4. Make future plans.

*There are four steps to apologizing. The first step begins with you.*

1. *Realize you need to apologize. This can take a little while. If you're not ready and someone tells you to apologize, it's OK to say something like, "I'm still really mad and I'm not ready to apologize yet. Can we talk about this after I calm down?"*
2. *Admit you were wrong and give a sincere apology. Say specifically what you did wrong. Be as honest as you can.*
3. *Explain why you acted the way you did. If you made a mistake, explain why. Everyone makes mistakes. Maybe you were mad, having a bad day because of something that happened at home, or really tired; just let someone know what happened.*
4. *Make plans to make it right. This can be as general as, "I will try not to do that again," or as specific as, "Let me make it up to you by getting you a new binder like the one I spilled water on".*



## Empower

10-15 minutes

### Apology Role-Plays

Invite students to come up to the front of the class and act out an apology using the four steps. Use some of the scenarios below or make up ones that are more specific to your students. You do not need to have them act out the disagreement, only the apology.

#### Scenario 1

Two students are having an argument about which sports team is better. One person says the other person is dumb for thinking that their team is better.

#### Scenario 2

A teacher gets upset with a student because they don't have the work done that was due that day. The student wasn't able to get the work done because someone in their family got sick. *(This is a good one for teacher interaction; it's important for students to see the teacher apologize, too.)*

#### Scenario 3

Two students are walking past each other and one accidentally knocks into the other.

#### Scenario 4

Two close friends are talking about something very personal. The first friend asks the second not to say anything to anyone else. The second friend tells someone else what the friend said.

### Discussion

- *Were there any situations where both people needed to apologize?*
- *In some situations, it was accidental, but in other situations it was deliberate. How might the apologies sound the same or different?*
- *If you apologize to someone, and they don't accept your apology right away, is that okay or not okay? Why might they not accept your apology right away? (This is a good question to transition into the next lesson on forgiveness).*



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

To gauge understanding of the material, choose from either the evaluation or reflection questions as discussion, writing, or journal prompts. Consider providing additional time for deeper evaluation and reflection as needed.

### Evaluation Questions

- What is an apology?
- What are the steps to apologizing?
- How does apologizing show compassion for the other person?

### Reflection Questions

- Is it always important to apologize if you do something wrong? Why or why not?
- How do you feel when you get a sincere apology from someone? How do you feel when you give one?
- Is it okay to ask someone to apologize to you? Why or why not?

Apologizing is an act of compassion for yourself and others. When we make a sincere apology, using the four steps of apologizing, we are mending our relationship with someone and that makes our future relationships stronger! A person may not accept your apology right away because it takes them a while for the hurt to go away. That's okay. The important thing is that you apologized and that they know you are sorry.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL  
AS A RECOMMENDED  
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL  
AND EMOTIONAL  
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>