

Sorry. Not Sorry.

Apologies are necessary to accept the blame and take credit for one's fault. The fault could be an act of aggression, a harmful action, an accident, or a transgression on the victim. In these cases, the victim deserves and expects an apology from the perpetrator. Apologies pave the way for a supposedly better relationship between the offender and the victim. The apology is assumed to be sincere on the part of the offenders but in some cases, offenders are just trying to save their necks by apologizing. It can be assumed that when a child is forced to apologize, he is being taught reconciliation but in actuality, he is being taught manners and ethics.

When an offender apologizes whether voluntarily or after being forced to, the victim is likely to accept the apology as that is the socially accepted normal response to an apology. This exchange of apology and acceptance is a part of the corrective interchange process in psychological studies. The offenders become more likable after apologizing and the relationship between both the parties is pacified. To mention voluntary or coerced apologies, it can be observed that an offender could be moved by some internal reasons like his conscience pinching him to apologize voluntarily whereas a coerced apology could be because of external factors like a judge asking the offender to apologize (Jehle, Miller, Kemmelmeier, & Maskaly, 2012).

Taking into account the ability of people to judge whether an apology is forced or voluntary, it can be noted that the ability to judge varies with age as children are more naïve in social interactions and adults are more understanding of the intentions and motives behind certain social interactions. However, the ability to make a sound judgment improves with age. There is a consensus on apology being an appreciable act but even then, certain types of

transgressions demand a more positive response. If such a stern response is not given after making an offense, then such an offender is dealt with severely.

It is pertinent to note that the intentions of the perpetrator play a major role in drawing a reaction from the observers. It might be difficult to judge the intentions but with age and experience of having social conduct, one can make a sound judgment. If the intention of the offender is judged to be foul, the reaction of the observers would be strict and unforgiving if the society expects the offender to be good (Darby, 1982). It depends on the responsibility that the offender feels he might have towards his actions and the sense of morality and ethics that the society has, that confirm the society's response to the offender.

Moving on, it is also imperative to understand how significant an apology is to a person. People tend to overvalue the impact of an apology when they imagine receiving an apology before actually receiving one. That may not always be the case after an apology is made. An apology is made to smoothen the relationships but the results of different studies show that apologies may have variable effects. It is noted that people tend to overvalue apologies after being betrayed by someone. They imagined the apology to salvage the relationship but that did not always happen. They also assumed to develop more trust after an apology but trust is not relative to an apology.

The studies showed that people assumed an apology to be a miraculous problem-solver. They assumed that apologies were effective in rebuilding trust and in reconciling. There is another side to it as well. It is imperative to note that it takes time for the victim to make peace with an act of transgression. If an apology is made right after the incident, it would not have a positive impact on the victim but if it is made after some considerable amount of time, the apology would have a more positive impact. Apologies do often work because they are considered valuable by society even if they might not always be voluntary.

Furthermore, the discussion raises the question of whether people can differentiate between sincere and insincere apologies. Take into consideration a classroom setup where a teacher is angry at a student for fighting with another. The teacher coerces the first student to apologize to the second but the student believes that it was the fault of the second one. Due to coercion, he apologizes to his peer but we know that the apology was not a sincere one. In such cases, the observers can observe that a certain apology was made insincerely but the subject as in this case the teacher, might not see through. It can be noted that because of certain reasons, people's judgment can be clouded and they might make a wrong decision.

Even in their daily life, people are so accustomed to apologizing for small things like running into someone accidentally or getting ahead of someone in line that they have lost the essence of an actual apology and why they should apologize (Risen & Gilovich, 2007). The apology has just become a word to be said in uncomfortable circumstances and has lost its true meaning. Some people might perceive such insincere apologies as insults to their dignity and may want stricter apologies in response. One cannot blame them for having such convictions when sincere apologies have lost their essence. Social media today have helped people in wider social engagements where they try to portray their best selves but it has also taught people to prioritize themselves over others and a new wave of #sorrynotsorry has added a apologetic behavior among adults (Matley, 2018).

Moreover, it is significant to hold a mediation effort between an offender and the victim to redeem the relationship between them. A simple apology might not be very effective but a dialogue between the two can help them negotiate and come to a plausible solution. Studies show that these mediation efforts might not explicitly mention the offenders offering reparations but the efforts were indeed helpful in agreeing. The face-to-face mediation revealed

that offenders were more sincerely apologetical and in almost half of the cases, offenders were recorded saying they were sorry.

In short, it is imperative to note that an apology holds great value to the victims as well as the observers. The effects of a coerced and a voluntary apology may vary just as the effects of a sincere or an insincere one. But either way, the victims expect being apologized too. In some cases, as in relationships, it is seen that people may overvalue the significance of an apology but they expect it nonetheless. Some studies also showed that apologies have become ceremonial and have lost their essence. In essence, apologies have varied effects and the mediation efforts between a victim and the offender often bring a positive response from the victim if the apology is perceived as sincere.

References

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