



Amends vs. Apology!

This is taken from various sources and the personal ESH from several who have walked this same path.

An apology is defined as:

“an admission of error or discourtesy accompanied by an expression of regret,”

Amends is defined as:

“reparation or compensation for a loss, damage, or injury of any kind.”

Google says reparation is:

1. the making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.
2. the action of repairing something.

Saying “sorry” for me is often...

- I am uncertain of the harm I caused.
- I am avoiding strong emotions.
- I am avoiding stepping into another’s pain.
- When I am feeling shame, I often will say “sorry” repeatedly.
- I have used “sorry” to stop the conversation.
- My “sorry”, is often followed by a but. And my but is often followed by a justification which minimizes the harm I have done and usually shuts down the conversation.
- When I say “I am sorry” it rarely communicates a change in my behavior. I only communicate that I feel bad or regret something I did.

When I use the word “sorry”, I let it trigger questions that allow me to truly see the situation and take a step back and engage with the person. I am purposeful to not get into negative self talk as it is not beneficial to seeing the other person and the pain they might be expressing.

Amends for me is often...

- I am generally aware of the harm I have caused.
- I want to acknowledge the harm I have done.
- I know my behavior needs to change and can express that.
- I know a direction in how I might make amends.
- Choosing an amend over an apology changes my thinking in a way that helps me see what the one I offended has to say.
- Amends generally opens the conversation up.
- Unless I am made aware of a harm by another person, I have time to prepare and seek God about my motives. I also purpose to spend time connecting with God before and after making difficult amends.
- Asking for forgiveness is not apart of my amends.
- I can start with “I am sorry” but it needs to be the beginning not the end of the conversation. Often, I try to express my emotions rather than sorry.

If I am unable right a wrong, like me saying something that caused pain and confusion and I know I cannot take my words back. I ask God to guide me and help me to change. I ask if it would be helpful if I told the offended person how I am trying to live my life now. Most have said yes. Few have said no.

Some final thoughts and clarifications:

- I am not saying that I never say I am sorry to someone. There are plenty of things I can say sorry for in the moment that never need an amends to be made.
- Sometimes saying “sorry” is saying “ouch that hurts” with the other person. And is not expressed as an apology but instead empathy for the pain they are expressing.
- Not every situation needs an amend, but if I have done harm in any way, an apology is not the option I choose.
- Saying “I am sorry” can be the start of an amends, but it needs to not be the end of the conversation.
- For me, an apology is often only words. It does not express or show my new way of living. And often close the door to further conversation.
- Amends for me, is action taken to show the person I harmed my new way of living.

Questions I ask myself when I hear myself saying “sorry”.

- Is this an appropriate “sorry”? For me, an appropriate “sorry” in the moment is me accidentally doing something. Like bonking heads when we both bent over. It is genuine and in no need of amends.
- Am I avoiding their pain, my pain, my emotions, their emotions?
- Am I trying to end the conversation?
- Am I feeling shame?
- Am I justifying my action or my behavior?