**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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| **Objective:** Explore elements of an effective apology; evaluate and craft apologies. |

***Saying You’re Sorry***

**Directions:** Read the following article about effective apologies. As you read, underline actions that you usually do; star ideas that are new to you.

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| **Six-and-a-Half Steps to a Good Apology[[1]](#footnote-2)**  In their book, *Sorry, Sorry, Sorry: The Case for Good Apologies*, co-authors Marjorie Ingall and Susan McCarthy use research from psychology, sociology, law, and medicine to help us think about apologies—good ones and not-so-good ones.  Ingall and McCarthy say there are six-and-a-half steps to a good apology:   1. **Say you're sorry. Not that you "regret," not that you are "devastated." Say you're "sorry."** According to Ingall, I “regret” is how you feel, while “I’m sorry” is about how someone else feels, and when apologizing, you should prioritize the other person’s feelings. 2. **Say what it is that you're apologizing for**. Be specific. 3. **Show you understand why it was bad, take ownership, and show that you understand why you caused hurt.** Don’t say, “I’m sorry if I hurt your feelings.” This means that you are not really sorry for your words and actions, but seems to blame the other person—their hurt feelings are the problem, not what you said or did to hurt their feelings. 4. **Don't make excuses, but offer an explanation if needed.** Be careful not to defend yourself and your actions—again, this makes the apology about your feelings. If possible, convey that your actions were not done out of dislike or hostility. 5. **Say why it won't happen again.** What steps are you taking to do better? 6. **If it's relevant, offer to fix what’s broken:** "I'm going to pay for the dry cleaning. Just send the bill to me."   And the “half step,” according to Ingall and McCarthy, is listening—listening to the person you hurt and letting them speak, too.  While these steps do not need to follow this order, and while every apology doesn’t need to include every step, a thoughtful apology is a healthy, powerful way to maintain relationships with others. |

1. Which of the six-and-a-half steps do you usually do when making your apologies?

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1. Which of the steps is usually hardest for you to do?

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1. Was there anything that surprised you in the list?

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1. Consider this line from the text:

And the “half step,” according to Ingall and McCarthy, is listening—listening to the person you hurt and letting them speak, too.

In your opinion, what role can listening play in apologies? How might you feel if someone listened to you while apologizing?

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***Saying You’re Sorry* Reflection Questions**

1. Read the following case study to reflect on the qualities of effective apologies.

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| **A Case Study**  On a radio talk show, a United States senator was discussing a judicial trial that many Americans were interested in and following in the news. The senator used an exaggerated and stereotyped Japanese accent to make fun of the judge who was presiding over the trial.  After receiving considerable criticism, the senator’s office issued the following press release: “If I offended anyone, I’m sorry. I was making fun of the pomposity of the judge and the manner in which he’s dragging the trial out.” Many people objected to this “apology,” claiming that it was unsympathetic and inadequate.  The next day, the senator appeared in front of his colleagues in the Senate, and personally read this statement into the Senate record: “I’m here on the Senate floor to give a statement as it related to that episode. It was a sorry episode. As an Italian-American, I have a special responsibility to be sensitive to ethnic stereotypes. I fully recognize the insensitivity of my remarks about Judge Sato. My remarks were totally wrong and inappropriate. I know better. What I did was a poor attempt at humor. I am deeply sorry for the pain that I have caused Judge Sato and others. I offer my sincere apologies.” |

Using the charts, score each apology from the senator, placing a check next to the steps that are present.

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| **Apology #1**: If I offended anyone, I’m sorry. I was making fun of the pomposity of the judge and the manner in which he’s dragging the trial out. |

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| **Present** | **Components of a strong apology** |
|  | 1. Say you're sorry. Not that you "regret," not that you are "devastated." Say you're "sorry." |
|  | 1. Say what it is that you're apologizing for. Be specific. |
|  | 1. Show you understand why it was bad, take ownership, and show that you understand why you caused hurt. |
|  | 1. Don't make excuses, but offer an explanation if needed. |
|  | 1. Say why it won't happen again. |
|  | 1. If it's relevant, offer to fix what’s broken. |

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| **Apology #2**: I’m here on the Senate floor to give a statement as it related to that episode. It was a sorry episode. As an Italian-American, I have a special responsibility to be sensitive to ethnic stereotypes. I fully recognize the insensitivity of my remarks about Judge Sato. My remarks were totally wrong and inappropriate. I know better. What I did was a poor attempt at humor. I am deeply sorry for the pain that I have caused Judge Sato and others. I offer my sincere apologies. |

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| **Present** | **Components of a strong apology** |
|  | 1. Say you're sorry. Not that you "regret," not that you are "devastated." Say you're "sorry." |
|  | 1. Say what it is that you're apologizing for. Be specific. |
|  | 1. Show you understand why it was bad, take ownership, and show that you understand why you caused hurt. |
|  | 1. Don't make excuses, but offer an explanation if needed. |
|  | 1. Say why it won't happen again. |
|  | 1. If it's relevant, offer to fix what’s broken. |

1. What makes Apology #2 stronger than Apology #1?

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1. What might still be missing from Apology #2? Script specific language you think the senator could have included to improve Apology #2.

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**Stamp Your Learning for *Saying You’re Sorry***

1. Select two of the scenarios below, and craft an apology for that scenario. Refer to “Six-and-a-Half Steps to a Good Apology” when writing your response.

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| **Scenario** | **Who should you apologize to? What would you say?** |
| You and your three lab partners are working on your biology project. However, you didn’t send a part of your group project on time because you had to take care of a sibling. You didn’t give anyone a heads up. |  |
| Basketball practice is scheduled right after school. You showed up to basketball practice 20 minutes late because you went to talk to a teacher about an assignment you missed. As a result of being late, one of your teammates was left without a drill partner. |  |
| A classmate posts a story on Instagram. You share the story with a friend—and make fun of your classmate’s appearance. Unfortunately, you realize immediately after sending the message that you accidentally sent that message to both your friend---and the classmate. |  |
| You have two close friends. One of them tells you, in confidence, that their parents are divorcing. You promise to keep this information to yourself, but you can’t help it—you share this information with the second friend. |  |

1. Erika Ryan and Mary Louise Kelly, “Do you use these words when you apologize? It’s time to stop, researchers say,” National Public Radio, January 25, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/25/1150972343/how-to-say-sorry-give-good-apology> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)