## Caring Communication Skill Blameless Apologies

Many people find the words “I’m sorry” to be magic words. Yet, we sometimes resist saying “I’m sorry” because there are so many times when whatever happened was not our fault and so many more times when we don’t have the power to prevent or control what happened.

A *blameless* apology produces the magical effect of the words “I’m sorry” without your taking the blame or blaming anyone else. And these magic words ease many a hot situation.

A blameless apology simply recognizes the person’s experience. It says, “I’m sorry you’re suffering.”

A blameless apology communicates your regret that the other person is somehow suffering, *whether it is your fault or not.* This tends to calm upset people down.

**Tips**

* Think to yourself, “I’m sorry this person is suffering.”
* Speak from your heart *without* getting defensive, *without* making excuses, and *without* placing blame on others.
* Be sincere. If you somehow communicate that you don’t care, even if you say the words “I’m sorry,” the person won’t hear them.
* Be personal. Speak in the first person, saying “I’m sorry,” not "We’re sorry."
* Be specific. Refer to the person’s experience that you feel sorry about.
* Be immediate: Give the blameless apology right away even before finding out the details or finding remedies.

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| **Examples** **of blameless apologies**:   * *I’m sorry this wasn’t what you were expecting…* * *I’m really sorry it was so uncomfortable for you…* * *I’m sorry you were inconvenienced…* * *I’m sorry it’s been so challenging for you…* * *I’m sorry you haven’t gotten the service you deserved…* * *I’m so sorry you’re hurting…* * *I’m sorry you had such a long wait…* | **These are NOT blameless apologies.**   * *I’m sorry you’re still waiting. It’s a zoo here.* * *That doctor’s always late.* * *Whoa, that doctor’s a different breed! I can’t speak for him.* * *I’m sorry this happened, but we’re very short-staffed.* |