

## **Making Apologies. Moving From Forgiveness to Redemption**

By Dr Beth Hedva

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Dr Beth Hedva, (RPsych #3121), internationally renowned for blending spirituality with 'best practices' in psychology, professionals and lay-persons alike, to use inner psychic healing resources for Self-renewal and community healing.

**There is a difference** between forgiveness and repentance, reconciliation, or reparations and redemption. Forgiveness is the by-product of doing our own *inner-work*. When we feel injured, instead of acting out our pain, we turn inward to discover an inner source of healing that can liberate us from the pain and injury.

That is why forgiveness is something we give to ourselves. Our health, healing or sense of wholeness does not depend upon getting something from someone else in order to be 'ok'. Rather, by going within, one discovers an 'inner truth' about oneself, one's true nature as a human being—both frailties and strengths.

From this process wisdom is gained—you gain insights not only about yourself, but about what it means to be a vulnerable human being who has needs that may not always get met the way we want them to. The injury is *for-giving* a person an opportunity to turn inward and come to know oneself much better—one's vulnerabilities and greater capacities—and then, having discovered one's true Self, one is inspired to '*give-forth*' the gift of the 'true Self' in the form of wisdom gleaned, compassion for the human condition, and other personal insights or lessons learned.

**Redemption** is a way of intentionally setting things back into balance after a relationship has been thrown off balance. When we realize that we have caused injury to someone else we can redeem ourselves by

- **acknowledging the wrong and its impact on the other**
- **making an apology.**
- **seeking to a method to return the relationship to respect, honor and balance.**

The return to respect is done many different ways, and in part is culturally defined. Punishment is an old-fashioned way of 'righting a wrong.' And there are more forgiving methods. We can redeem ourselves by offering others **repentance** and **reparations** in hopes of **reconciling** the injury we participated in or caused.

- **Reconciliation** demonstrates understanding by offering a way to appease the injuries and find a settlement that meets the needs of both parties.
- **Repentance** demonstrates remorse and shows a desire to atone for mistakes.
- **Reparation** offers to repair damages done through offering compensation
- **Redemption** is about deliverance, liberation and release from pain, shame, guilt or blame.

We redeem ourselves by recognizing that, whether we meant to or not, our actions may have hurt another person. We open our awareness and acknowledge how this person has needs that we did not meet, (or perhaps could not meet). Even if we cannot meet someone's needs, we can show acceptance of another's frailties by appreciating their vulnerability. Whether we like it or not, being vulnerable is part of the human condition.

We have all been injured. And we have all caused injury to others. It comes from each of us being 'works in progress.' Injuries are *for-giving* us all an opportunity to come to know ourselves, and to awaken to the great truth of who and what we are as human beings. Then we have the possibility of *giving-forth* our true-Self in all our relationships. Begin your *innerwork* by asking yourself:

**Who has harmed me?**

**Whom have I harmed?**

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## Stages of Apology

Do your own *innerwork* first. Start by rebuilding your relationship with Self T-R-U-S-T.

### **1. T --Take Time Out to turn inward and discover a greater truth--**

Was your anger, fear, manipulation, or hurt helpful or not helpful in getting your needs met? Challenge your self-righteous beliefs. Identify what you are resisting. Identify also what can help you accept reality 'as it is' instead of trying to make it (and others) comply with your idea of how reality 'ought to be' 'should be' 'must be' 'has to be' or 'needs to be' (according to your opinion). Just because you think so, doesn't make it true.

### **2. R --Relax, release attachment to outcomes--**

Breathe. Use the breath and energy work to help heal anger, fear, guilt, shame, hurt and loss. Soothe and calm yourself. Relax your body with breath and energy work. Send yourself healing energies. Connect to your inner source of healing. Relax your mind by letting go of outcomes. Rebuild trust in your inner creative Source of support, the One who guides you to the best outcome possible (which may be different than the one you want, expect, demand or prefer).

### **3. U --Use Intuition to Understand--**

What are the stressors or triggers that are upsetting or disturbing you? Who in you is so upset? How old (or young) is the part of you that is frustrated, angry, scared of losing or feeling hurt? What is it that this part of you really needs? Finally imagine another way of getting your unmet needs taken care of.

### **4. S --Share what you have learned--**

Start by writing in your journal. Explore the circumstances that led to the injury. Observe whether your actions, attitude or words helped or hurt you and others. Acknowledge what you really needed, and how you might take better care of yourself in the future. Explore your insights further. Keep working until your heart no longer feels closed, heavy, your mind is racing, or your body tense or tired. Instead keep exploring until your heart feels open and light, your mind clear and your body relaxed. When your mind is clear, your heart open and your body relaxed, you know you have come to the truth that 'sets you free.'

### **5. T --Take Action: Apologize and Redeem Yourself --**

a) **Acknowledge** : I am sorry for hurting you when I \_\_\_\_\_ (your behaviour)

b) **Assimilate** (*your experience*): I realize that I was feeling \_\_\_\_\_  
and a better way for me to take care of that would be to \_\_\_\_\_

c. **Appreciate and empathize** (*their experience*): When I \_\_\_\_\_ (*acknowledge your hurtful behavior again*) . . . . .

I can understand that you would think \_\_\_\_\_ (*imagine how the other person may have interpreted your behavior, how that belief would create pain for them*) . . . .

and if you were thinking that it makes sense that you might have feel \_\_\_\_\_ (*imagine how the other person may have reacted emotionally*) . . .

when that happened; and I can imagine what you really needed was \_\_\_\_\_  
(*this will be your empathic understanding of the other person's deeper need that went unmet in your interaction with each other.* Note: Basic human needs for **safety, security, love,**

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**belonging, self-worth/esteem, need to be important and valued** are called 'deficit needs' by Abraham Maslow and most often point the way to injuries suffered in our childhood. **We also have growth needs**—a need for meaning and purpose in life, a need for partnership, a need for harmony and beauty, for Self-actualization and transcendence. Sharing and appreciating your own and another's deeper needs may be very healing to both of you, because it opens up compassion for our all too human frailties, and allows for intimacy.

**d) Allow energy to move** toward new Awareness: Self-Redemption. . . .at this point you may notice that you actually feel genuine regret or sorrow. Confirm with words like

. . . **I am so sorry. . . Or . . .I regret how . . . . Or .. I feel bad about. . . .**

**e) Act on new Awareness . . .** Take Action to take to redeem yourself and your relationship:

**i) Reparations:** Is there something I can do now to make it up to you?

**ii) Reconciliation:** Would it make a difference if **next time** something like this happens I \_\_\_\_\_ (creative alternative action based on your new understanding of yourself and the other person's needs).

**iii) Repent:** Can you forgive me my shortcomings?

### **Practice writing a letter of forgiveness.**

Here is an example of a letter of apology written by one of my clients, Donna, to her former partner, Tom.

*Dear Tom,*

*I know there were many times, during this past year, I acted in ways that were hurtful to you. I am truly sorry. In the spirit of forgiveness, I am asking for your forgiveness.*

*Since your decision, I've made a profound shift. It began with the experience of my heart breaking and moved into an expanded heart opening. That process involved much self-reflection and many significant insights, transforming the heartache into clarity, learning and growth that feels life changing.*

*I've come to understand how and why I lost perspective in our relationship. Rather than seeing all the good and appreciating everything that worked well between us, I became focused on what wasn't working and the ways we were different. I was no longer able to accept and appreciate you just as you are. Instead, I became unhappy, distant and put pressure on you to change in order to meet my preferences/needs. All this involved many hours of heavy conversations and processing, which I know left you feeling blamed, criticized and depleted.*

*I feel much gratitude for this new level of understanding. I deeply appreciate the many gifts you and our relationship have given me. It has helped me become a more aware and whole person. At the same time, I wish I had a magic wand so I could go back. Knowing then what I know now, I'd have been able to act in a more loving and compassionate way. But alas, no magic wand. I can only hope that these words will convey the sincerity of my apology and will help ease the pain I've caused.*

*With Appreciation and Respect,*

*Donna"*