

# Dr. Peg's 4Rs of Forgiveness

## THE "MUST HAVE" STEPS TO APOLOGIZE WELL WITHOUT CAUSING MORE HARM

What you say or do may unintentionally hurt someone's feelings and cause them emotional pain. Sometimes emotional pain harms people, meaning it causes permanent damage. An effective apology can lessen the HURT and therefore mitigate any lasting HARM. Use these 4Rs to offer an effective apology to a coworker, family member, or friend.

### 1- Regret

- Express regret directly. Don't "beat around the bush."
- Use specific words that convey your remorse (e.g., "I sincerely apologize" or "I am so sorry.>").
- Acknowledge you're aware they are hurting and invite them to say exactly how you've hurt them and what they're feeling.
- Apologize for the impact of your actions or words, and avoid conditional language such as, "I'm sorry *if* you feel hurt."

### 2 - Responsibility

- Take responsibility for your actions and words. (e.g., "I'm sorry *that* my actions were hurtful to you" or "I apologize *that* my words were triggering." (It's important to own it by saying *that* not *if*).
- Don't blame the person for reacting or feeling hurt. They are not being "too sensitive" or "overdramatic"--they are simply being human and humans have feelings.
- Now is not the time to say what *they* did first, make excuses, or give detailed reasons for your actions. (You can put your behavior in context *without blaming* in step 3).

## 3 - Repair

- State how you'd like to try to repair the harm you've caused to them and/or your relationship.
- Ask them what they need as restitution or what they think would help to repair the damage or provide comfort for their pain.
- If there are reasons/causes for your behavior, *briefly* explain them and share your plan to address them (e.g., "It's trauma [addiction] related, and I plan to seek therapy [enter a 12-step program]").

## 4 - Request

- Request consideration by saying, "I pray that you can accept my apology" which creates space for them to actually decide if they can/will forgive you. "Can you forgive me?" is also a simple option.
- Whether they forgive you now (or never), ask the Lord to search *your* heart and show you *what he wants you to know*. Follow through on whatever he instructs you to do next.

The 4 Rs ultimately point to **Repentance** — changing your mind, heart, and actions, turning away from sin and self, and returning to God. Remain humble and be repentant, knowing that whether or not *they* forgive you, God does.



### WORK WITH DR. PEGGY MITCHELL CLARKE

*Allowing Truth and Love to repair the root cause of emotional pain, harmful behavior patterns, and counterproductive habits is at the heart of Dr. Peg's 1-on-1 coaching, private intensives, transformational retreats, and powerful group programs for Christian women professionals, entrepreneurs, and ministry leaders. Schedule a free strategy call with Dr. Peg and join Dr. Peg's virtual community, "Joyful Christian Women" where the focus is on Christ, community, productivity, and purpose.*