

Apology Languages

The differences in how we say 'sorry'

Take a look at the list below. You'll see examples of the five different ways people may say 'sorry' when things go wrong.

Saying "I'm sorry". For some people, hearing these words really matters. They need the apology to be named out loud. Not implied or assumed, but clearly said.

Taking responsibility. Feeling that the other person truly understands the impact of what they've done, without minimising or becoming defensive.

Making things right. For some, actions speak louder than words. They may feel more reassured when the other person tries to repair things in a meaningful way.

Showing it will be different. An apology can feel more genuine when it includes change and a sense that they will do something differently next time.

Asking for forgiveness. Some people need to be invited into the repair. Being asked "can you forgive me?" can help them feel included in the process of moving on.

The concept of apology languages was developed by Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas - you'll find more information here:

www.5lovelanguages.com

Why Apology Languages can be useful

Apology languages can help us to notice that we don't all experience repair in the same way.

They can help us:

- Understand why a "sorry" sometimes doesn't land
- Put words to what we might need after a disagreement or rupture
- Reduce repeated misunderstandings in relationships
- Become more curious about each other, rather than critical

They can also remind us that when something goes wrong, it's not just whether someone apologises – but how they do it that can shape how it feels.

In a relationship it can be helpful to understand each other's apology languages, so a well-intended apology doesn't get lost in translation. They don't explain everything, but they can be a useful starting point for conversation.

Want to explore this together in your relationship?

You might find it helpful to ask each other:

- "What helps you feel that someone really means their apology?"
- "What tends to make an apology fall short for you?"
- "What do you need when something has hurt or gone wrong?"