

# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Course: Apologies and Forgiveness

Level:



**Objective:** Students will practice how to give and receive apologies in a sincere manner and recognize emotions that influence our reactions.

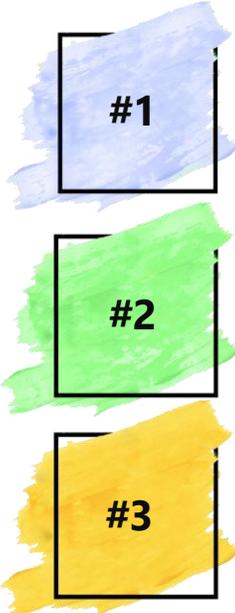
**Course Intent:** Provide students with the tools to acknowledge and understand receiving or giving an apology to and from one another.

## Applications & Benefits:

Students will learn the importance of apologizing and forgiveness. They will also learn the benefits of understanding other's emotions.

## Course Snapshot

This course incorporates the following lessons.



LESSONS	ACTIVITY	TIME REQUIRED	RESOURCES & MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>Apologizing</b>	Whole Group Discussion	10 - 15 minutes	- Lesson definitions - White board or chart paper
<b>Connecting Emotions to Apologies</b>	Group Discussion Small Group or Pairs	10 – 15 minutes	- Lesson information - Role-play scenarios
<b>Lesson Classroom Exercises</b>	Individual Exercises	5 – 10 minutes ongoing	- Lesson information - Student Journals (optional) - Emotion Flashcards (optional)

## Lesson Rationale:

Learning to apologize and really mean it is important because it is often the first step a child takes in growing up to become a decent and understanding person. There are dual parts to Apologizing and both are necessary for a child to understand. When you apologize, you are not just saying you regret an action, but you are also taking responsibility for your actions and accepting the blame for what you might have said or done that offended or hurt someone.



As a teacher, it can be difficult to know if a student really means it when they say they are “sorry,” but often asking questions is a good tactic. Questions like, “Why are you sorry?” and, “What are you sorry for,” can allow a student to demonstrate that they know what they did or said was wrong and take responsibility for it. Avoiding the phrase “I’m sorry” and instead urging students to say, “I’m sorry for,” can be an easy way for students to remember to fully express their apology. This strategy can also help keep students from getting in the habit of just saying sorry because they feel they are supposed to. It is important that students learn the meaning of an apology and the importance behind it.

### HELPFUL TIPS

- Lead by example; be willing to express how you feel as a teacher and allow the class to follow in the lead of your openness with your emotions.
- The power of an apology is ruined if it is forced. Make sure students understand that taking accountability for a wrongdoing is key and more important than giving an apology they do not sincerely mean. If you can't tell whether very young children are sincere in their apology, focus and practice what they should do next time in that situation. In fact, this is a good strategy for all ages.
- Reinforce the act of giving apologies to students when you observe an act of giving or receiving an apology. You can say, “I’m glad you apologized,” and “Thank you for listening to their apology.”

# Introductory Lesson #1: Apologizing

## What to Know Before You Begin

### Definition

#### What does it mean to apologize?

*To apologize is to sincerely acknowledge an act of wrongdoing towards someone and give a spoken statement of your regret or remorse for hurting them.*

#### What does it mean to accept an apology?

*Accepting an apology means having a feeling of compassion towards the wrongdoer as well as an acknowledgement that the offense was not intentional. What an apology is not is refusal to accept that they may have done something to hurt others' feelings. It is not a punishment for the Wrongdoer.*

### Points to Cover

#### **A sincere apology is not one that can be forced:**

Students must be aware that just saying sorry, with no genuine feeling behind it, defeats the purpose of the apology. Students should practice "Say it, mean it," meaning they should only apologize if they mean it.

#### **An apology helps let the person know you care:**

An apology won't always be readily accepted as it does not undo the action, but it will let the person you apologize know that you regret what you might have done or said, which can mean everything to that person.





## Public vs. Private Apologies

Giving an apology sometimes can invoke feelings of shame, which is typically why we have such difficulty admitting when we are wrong.



### Activity

Role-play a situation with another student. Ask for a student volunteer to come to the board and draw with you. Tell the student ahead of time that you are going to mess up their picture so that they are prepared. Act out a situation where you ask the student to draw a dog/cat/etc and as they start drawing, shout, “No! Not like that!” and erase or scribble over their drawing.

Ask students what they think you should say to the student volunteer now that you’ve hurt their feelings and messed up their picture. Most likely, students will tell you to apologize.

Explain the definition of an apology and explain that an apology has two parts. The first part is that you acknowledge and realize that you have done something wrong. In this example, you hurt someone’s feelings about their picture and then ruined their hard work. Next, an apology includes an honest statement to the person in which you accept responsibility for what you did. Just saying, “I’m sorry” doesn’t take the blame or responsibility for what you did. Sometimes, just saying “I’m sorry” isn’t honest or sincere either. A sincere apology labels why you are sorry and takes the blame or responsibility for it.

To follow up the example, ask students to share ways you can apologize to the other student. Make sure the apology includes a statement of why you are sorry and a statement of responsibility. For example, “I’m sorry I yelled at you and erased your picture. I shouldn’t have yelled. Next time, I’ll just explain why I wanted you to draw it differently.”

Next, be sure to follow-up with the accepting of an apology, as that is a key skill as well. Ask the class how the volunteer (from the example) might act differently towards the teacher if they don’t accept her apology. Will they be happy to listen and follow directions? Will they want to participate again? Remind students that accepting apologies is just as important and giving apologies.

## Lesson #2: Connecting Emotions to Apologies

### What to Know Before You Begin

#### **Connecting Emotions and Apologies**

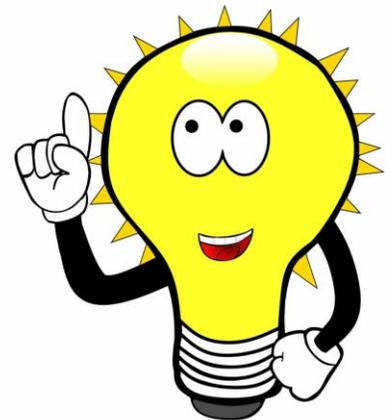
We can help students connect their emotions to apologies. We should ask students to consider why someone else was able to upset them. What did that person do that elicited such a strong emotion? Was the emotion valid or reactionary? Students must also learn that they sometimes need to forgive themselves, in addition to others. If you cannot fully forgive yourself, you will never be able to lead a happy and healthy life because you will always be focused on the overwhelming guilt you feel.

Giving and receiving apologies is fundamental. Emotions can manifest and get out of control if they are not addressed properly. Not learning the basics of apologizing and forgiveness can lead to a life filled with resentment, bitterness, and unaccountability that will hinder future relationships.

Accepting an apology is also critical because it teaches students the importance of forgiveness. Forgiveness can often be a harder concept for students to grasp because it can be difficult to move on from hurt feelings, but no good comes from holding grudges or allowing hurt to fester. Forgiveness can also offer another level of introspection for students that can allow them to better understand themselves and the reason behind emotions.

#### **Fascinating Details**

Resentment, and holding onto angry feelings towards someone, has been tied to depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Feeling angry towards someone for a prolonged period is unhealthy and unproductive. Those who hold grudges are said to feel a sense of weight lifted off them upon being able to hear forgiveness or give it.





## Activity

Provide students with the following scenarios. Have them talk in pairs or small groups to identify the emotions attached to the actions. Do the first one together as an example.

Scenario: You borrowed your sibling's shirt without asking and, during lunch, you spilled your red juice on it.

Ask students, "How would you feel if you stained your sister or brother's shirt?" Students might be able to immediately recognize that the sibling will feel angry, but what will the child who borrowed the shirt feel? If student responses are a little vague, such as, "They will feel bad," guide students to recognize the feeling of guilt for ruining the shirt or anxiety about how the sibling will react.

Then, discuss the emotions of the sibling. Yes, they probably feel angry and disappointed. Ask students, "What would you say if you were the sibling?" Remind students that accepting apologies is just as important. Have students share ways in which the sibling might respond, such as, "I am really angry you ruined my shirt. I accept your apology, but don't take my shirts again without Asking."

Here are some additional scenarios to have students practice. Ask them to label the emotion that each person might be feeling.

- You borrowed a friend's book, and now it is lost.
- Your mom forgot to pack you a cookie in your lunch, so when you got home you yelled at her.
- Your friend fairly beat you in a video game but you called them a cheater.
- You really wanted to play with the basketball, so when a classmate put it down to get a drink, you took it.

## Lesson #3: Classroom Exercises

### Activity

Below are examples of various activities that are aimed at helping students address their Own emotions and encourage sincere apologies.

#### **Flash Cards**

Make a game out of visual cues for emotions. Sad face for sad, smiley face for happy, tears for upset and an angry face for mad. Ask questions about how they felt at the beginning of the day and how they ended the day.



#### **“How full is your bucket?”**

When a child has an empty “bucket” they tend to feel sad or upset. This may cause them to act out towards another student. The bucket begins to “fill” with each pleasant experience they have. What are some activities that may cause the bucket to empty? What are some good experiences that help keep the bucket full? Examples: Housekeeping center with Mary and Luc.



#### **Think Different**

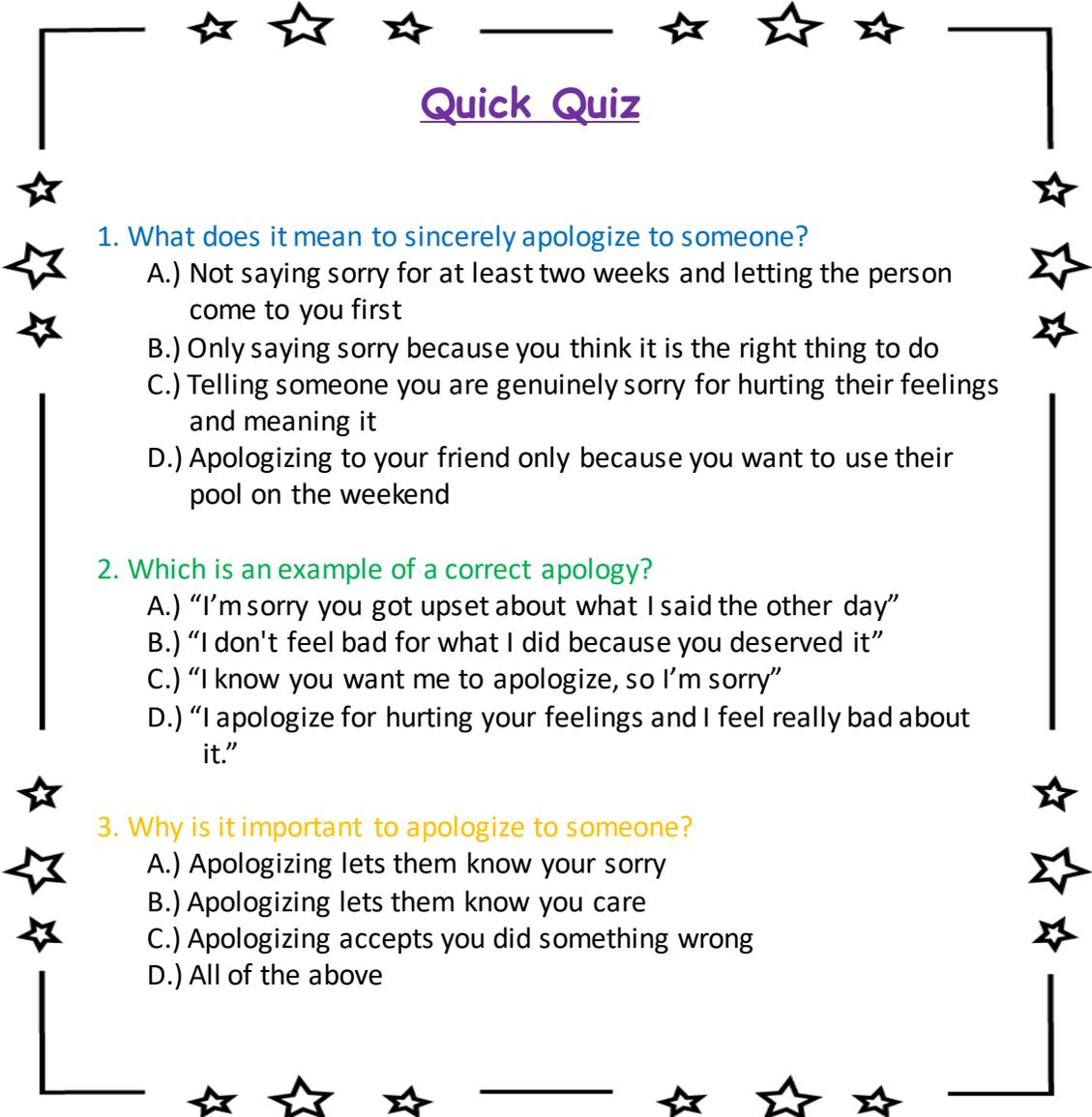
How are you addressing an issue where you would accept an apology? Are you openly willing to talk about the problem? Are you able to accept the apology or is it a constant issue that comes up within the classroom?



#### **Emotional Banking**

Talk about it! Children learn from their visual environment. If the parent struggles to give or receive an apology, they should try talking about it out loud so that the child may learn from the example.





## Quick Quiz

1. What does it mean to sincerely apologize to someone?

- A.) Not saying sorry for at least two weeks and letting the person come to you first
- B.) Only saying sorry because you think it is the right thing to do
- C.) Telling someone you are genuinely sorry for hurting their feelings and meaning it
- D.) Apologizing to your friend only because you want to use their pool on the weekend

2. Which is an example of a correct apology?

- A.) "I'm sorry you got upset about what I said the other day"
- B.) "I don't feel bad for what I did because you deserved it"
- C.) "I know you want me to apologize, so I'm sorry"
- D.) "I apologize for hurting your feelings and I feel really bad about it."

3. Why is it important to apologize to someone?

- A.) Apologizing lets them know your sorry
- B.) Apologizing lets them know you care
- C.) Apologizing accepts you did something wrong
- D.) All of the above

### Teacher Feedback

Please provide insights on any adjustments made regarding the actual use of the content above.  
Feel free to share your thoughts, suggestions, constructive criticism.  
Email your feedback to: [info@mylearningtools.org](mailto:info@mylearningtools.org)