

The Washington Post

What Makes an Apology Acceptable

[FINAL Edition]

The Washington Post - Washington, D.C.

Date: Oct 8, 2006

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Section: EDITORIAL

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Ten years as a divorce mediator have taught me a different lesson about apologies from that reported in the Sept. 25 Dispatch From the Department of Human Behavior, "Apologies Accepted? It Depends on the Offense."

I have learned that to make a successful apology, people must do three things:
Specifically and unambiguously acknowledge their error.

Convincingly show through the tone of their comments that they are genuinely troubled by their behavior.

Listen respectfully and patiently to the responses to their apologies.
If these three tasks are done well and honestly, then apologies can bring healing from even profound violations of trust, such as extramarital affairs.

JOHN SPIEGEL

Silver Spring