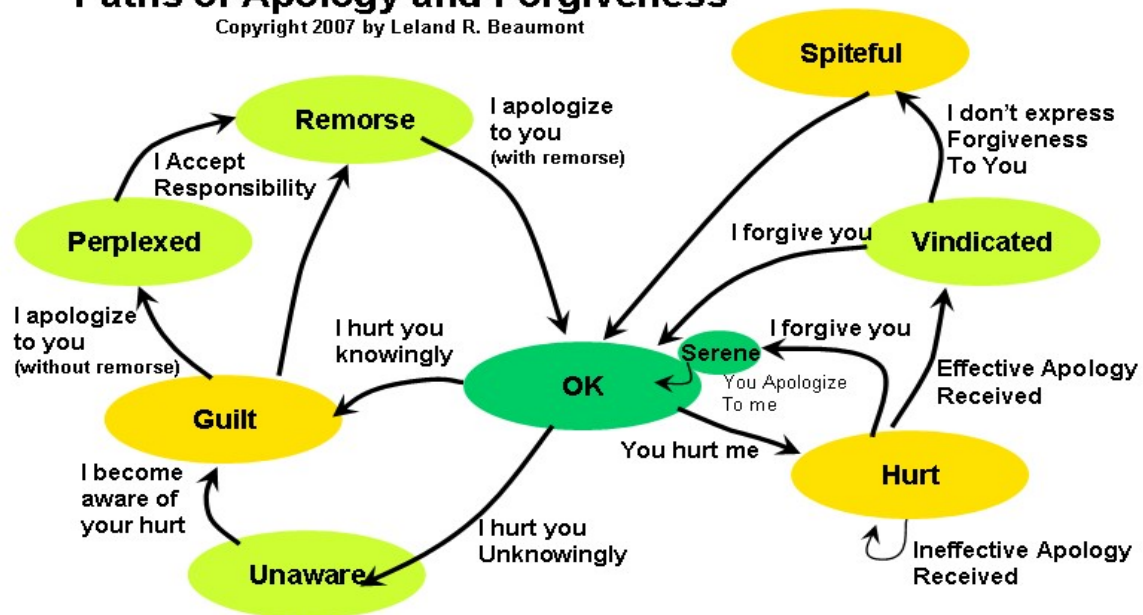


## Paths of Apology and Forgiveness

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## Chapter 15 - Apologizing

It's easy to miss the point of an apology, and even easier to poison an apology by wedging an excuse in with one. Using an excuse moves the focus back to me, and the focus of my apology is to acknowledge three basic things:

1. This is how I put my needs before your needs;
2. I do care about you, but I was caring about me more at the time (I was being selfish or greedy);
3. I see how I made you feel uncertain, that before I did or said what I did, your life was more predictable for you and that you had to change some things to get back on track – You had to stop doing what you wanted to be doing and do what you had to instead, and because of me.

Apologizing means that I understand things that are still a step away; I can start with rationalizing that “they had it coming,” or some other eye-for-an-eye argument, or I can start by understanding that, whatever I am apologizing for is something that I either went out of my way to make happen, or that I should have gone out of my way to prevent from happening – as long as the harm or results were (or should

have been) foreseeable to me, and that I am sorry that didn't act differently. There is a big distinction in acting on my own free-will or acting under the duress that others impose or the duress of *duty*; in my life there are and were enough things that were fully within my control for me to start with, and by the time I reach the more complicated dilemmas I will have gained my experience and courage to do the right things to address them.

If I can't get to this understanding, then I am going to save my breath because I could very well end up having to apologize for my insincere apology as well – I will just be making more emotional work for myself instead of getting some emotional work accomplished.

As a man, a great deal of my apologies involve something to do with sex, and even though sex is a survival need that is very strong, as a civilized person I should be able to exercise control of my needs rather than excuse them (make an excuse) – it is up to me to determine that, even though we are both drinking and wanting to blow off some steam, I should not enter into a relationship after that when I don't see much beyond a capable and willing sexual partner – especially when I see that her feelings toward me are stronger than my feelings toward her, and that she is making plans based on an 'us' that I have no real intention of participating in.

Religions are very important for people because they tend to offer a road map of how to treat people in the present moment, treat people looking forward, and forms of confession and retribution to clean-up the past. I know that people need to share what is bothering them, with someone else, and the more embarrassing or unwelcome the past circumstances are, the more damage there is in being the sole holder of that knowledge.

Prevention is worth a pound of cure for me when something emotional is going on. My new priorities are to, first prevent the things that are happening now that are going to cause harm; second, prevent the foreseeable things in the future that are going to cause harm, and then to look back on the past harm that I have caused or may have caused and to address and apologize for them.