

Should I Make My Kids Apologize?

Often reconciliation requires that an offender come back to try to make things right. How do we teach children to handle these situations? Saying "I'm sorry" is a reflection of an emotion that one feels inside. If a child truly feels sorrow for doing the wrong thing, then saying, "I'm sorry" is certainly appropriate.

Sometimes children don't believe they've done anything wrong. Or they believe that the person offended was also wrong or was the instigator. Of course, even when children believe that they've been treated unfairly, they're still responsible for their part of the problem. A sarcastic answer or a returned punch can't be excused because the other person started it.

To avoid having children say one thing (I'm sorry) while feeling something different in their hearts, we encourage children to say, "I was wrong for... Will you forgive me?" This statement doesn't require an emotion but is an act of the will. A child should be required to take responsibility for an offense whether it was provoked or not.

Be careful about disciplining only one child in an argument. Both are usually at fault in some way. Trying to figure out who started it rarely leads to peace. Victims are often instigators. Discipline children separately and teach them each how to respond to offenses. When they make a mistake teach them how to admit it and ask for forgiveness.

Of course, older children can learn to say, "I'm sorry" even if they aren't at fault. Sometimes we say it because we're wrong and know it. Other times we apologize because we truly are sorry that the relationship is damaged and we're saddened that the other person is in pain. That's a great concept to teach teens.

Teaching children to admit mistakes and seek to make things right is an important part of correction. In fact, correction teaches us all valuable things. It's often in the correction times that heart moments happen.

If you'd like to learn more about helping your kids develop a positive view of correction, consider the children's curriculum, [Treasure Hunters](#). In these lessons we teach children about the treasures hidden in correction.