

A Protocol for Teaching Apology of Action

Sometimes restitution is necessary when a student returns to the class after breaking a rule to repair damage to the class.

Students who return from TAB may do so without discussion about the offending behavior; however, there may be times when some clearing of the air is necessary to prevent resentment among members of the class (and the teacher!). To emphasize the importance of repairing what is broken, teachers should take a proactive approach in teaching students how to bridge the rift created by a poor behavior choice and the value of restoring relationships and trust by introducing the Apology of Action. An Apology of Action requires the perpetrator demonstrate an attitude of apology through some agreed upon act. This “act” can be as simple as replacing a broken pencil or as elaborate as baking cookies. The Apology of Action should be one that is doable for the offending student and acceptable to the offended party.

Teaching Apology of Action;

At the beginning of the year or semester, have students brainstorm a list of actions they might take to demonstrate to a classmate that he or she is sincerely sorry for an offense. The task of developing this list should occur at a time when no one has experienced hurt feelings. This will make it easier for students to be objective as they think about what might be comforting to them when a friend or classmate has injured them. Some common ideas generated might be:

- √ Write a note to the person
- √ Offer to do a favor for that person like: help with assignment, homework, or task.
- √ Invite the person to do something with you: play a game, eat lunch together, or attend an after-school event.
- √ Make something for them: a card, cookies, fudge.

If students make silly, unrealistic suggestions like - buy them a car, or give them a pony, go ahead and include them on the list. As soon as students learn the process for apology of action, they will realize that silly suggestions are unrealistic.

After generating this list, explain that there are times when mere words are not sufficient to show remorse for disruption of an activity, destroying an item, or hurting another’s feelings. Explain that students may choose from this list when there is a situation when an action is needed to repair hurt feelings or restore a broken relationship.



Roles and Responsibilities of the injured party and the perpetrator in the Apology of Action

When an Action of Apology is required, the perpetrator must give a verbal apology for the offense, however, the injured party has the right to indicate whether they accept the apology as is or not, so there can be true reconciliation, not just going through the motions. If the injured party says, “an apology is not enough.” Then the perpetrator may choose an action of apology from the list created by the class. The offended party may reject the first suggestion and the perpetrator may suggest a second action. The offended party has the option of rejecting two offers, but must accept the third offer.

Getting the Repair/Restitution Message Across to Students

One of the best things a student can do after making a mess is to clean it up. It’s good for the class, good for the teacher, and most of all, good for the perpetrator. The act of repair can restore the student’s faith in his own goodness, a necessity in the development of character. Students must understand that the goal of any act of repair, restitution or apology is not a punishment, but rather a means of restoring the perpetrator to good standing with the group. One way to help students internalize the power of restoration is to use stories from literature of one person apologizing and making it up to another as talking points for the use of Apology of Action. Other ways to introduce the idea could include:

- √ Using the Share time during CPR to tell about a time when you messed up and had to make it up to someone else.
- √ Finding video clips that demonstrate restoration of a relationship through some form of apology that includes an action.
- √ Use CPR to brainstorm additional ways that a person can make up to another.
- √ Use the Daily News message to gather ideas.

Modeling that it is never too late to set things right is a way to help kids restore their integrity and repair damage they cause. The goal is for students to learn how to demonstrate and experience for themselves how responsible acts can replace guilt, resentment, and grudges and replaces the message of “revenge” with that of repair and restoration.

