

Apologies Instructor's Notes

Effective use of apologies is very culture specific. If there is any topic in conflict resolution where knowledge of another culture is essential, it is this one. Those who teach about apologies, and those who apologize, must "know their own interests," and "the interests of the Other Person," very accurately in order for apologies to be helpful in diminishing tension and making amends. That said, there is a lot of evidence from North America, that well-timed, genuine and detailed apologies can have a great effect.

It is also possible to make matters much worse by an ill-timed or non-genuine apology. One class room exercise that is fun to use is to ask the class to come up with "insulting apologies." Students will immediately come up with creative examples of people who manage to blame the victim, humiliate the Other Person more, and so on. The idea of insulting apologies can help to illuminate the importance of the aspects of a "real" apology.