



How to Apologize to Someone in the LGBTQ+ Community

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As we celebrate Pride month, some influential experiences may be forgotten or not yet processed for many in the LGBTQ+ community. These can include apologies never received for behavioral mistakes or microaggressions that someone in the LGBTQ+ community may have experienced. Whether it was a big mistake or a small mistake, being able to process and apologize to the person, may not only help you better your relationship, but also help the individual move on. Therefore, this article is for those who want to apologize to someone they may have offended in the LGBTQ+ community in hopes to create a safer and healing society.

On average, about 36% of the LGBTQ+ community reported facing discrimination in a recent study; this number increased to 62% and 69% when examining transgender and nonbinary people, respectively (Gruberg et al., 2020). Often for people in the LGBTQ+ community, discrimination may be a traumatizing experience. Traumatic experiences commonly lead to avoidance of a person, situation, thoughts, and/or feelings. The person who was wronged may be suffering from the experience, holding back from coming out, silencing their voice out of fear of being judged, or only finding safety in the comfort of their bedroom or behind the screen in online self-help groups. These are only some of the many situations that individuals may go through. Whether it was conscious or unconscious, behaviors such as words or physical actions have consequences. Other people's feelings can be hurt by your actions and people have a right to feel their emotions.

So, how do you start apologizing? The following are recommendations or guidelines that may be useful. They are not a step-by-step linear process but points to help guide you. Such is life, that these tips may not guarantee a good outcome but may offer a healing start.

Guidelines and examples:

1. Think of a person you may have hurt and a specific behavior that you want to apologize for.
"I think I may have hurt Jose's feelings because I kept calling him 'her' instead of 'him' during a conversation. He told me he was transitioning to a man and I did not try to correct myself. He was more quiet than usual."
2. Start with expressing empathy and admitting responsibility for how your behavior may have affected the person. Try to focus on your behavior without making excuses for yourself as not to shift the blame.

“Jose, I wanted to say I am sorry for constantly calling you ‘she’ the other day and not correcting myself to use ‘he.’ It may have hurt your feelings or made you feel uncomfortable. I realize how much it means to you to be called by the right pronouns.”

3. Explain how you can specifically work to change your behavior so that the likelihood of this mistake happening again is decreased. This shows effort to regain trust and change for the better of the relationship.

“I am going to work on being more active in using your preferred pronouns as well as correcting myself if I use the wrong pronoun again. If you are comfortable with it, I would like you to call me out on it or give me a nudge if I forget.”

4. Whether the person accepts your apology or not, is their choice. Apologizing and attempting to make amends reveals the bravest character strength of all—vulnerability. By understanding how your actions affect others and apologizing, you take one step closer to creating a healing society for the LGBTQ+ community to feel safer in. This is something to be proud of.

References

Gruberg, S., Mahowald, L., & Halpin, J. (2020). The state of the LGBTQ community in 2020: A national public opinion study. *Center for American Progress*, 1-27.

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