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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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September 2021

How to apologise and mean it

You probably have memories of being forced to apologise when you were a child. You'd say you were sorry, but you wouldn't really mean it.

And just saying the words didn't work, and it didn't heal anything.

A real apology needs to come from an intention of restoring trust and healing wounds. And it's hard.

We often avoid apologising, partly because we're worried about unleashing even more anger, and partly because it feels uncomfortable.

As Reachout.com points out, "Apologising is hard because we don't want to feel bad about ourselves. We try to have a positive image of ourselves, and our need to protect that can make sincerely apologising quite hard."

However, a sincere apology can not only mend cracks in a relationship, but make it stronger. Here's a nine step system you can follow:

1. Ask for permission to apologise

Etiquette expert and founder of The Etiquette School of America, Maralee

McKee, says your apology affects the other person, so they need to consent. You can't just go to someone, open up raw wounds and then just leave. They might need some time before they're ready to listen.

2. Make it clear what you're apologising for

Be specific. It shows the other person you understand exactly what you did wrong.

3. Admit you were wrong

Take responsibility and be careful not to make excuses.

4. Acknowledge their feelings

This is the make-or-break moment. Say you're sorry for hurting them. Note: you're not sorry "if it hurt you", or "if you were offended". That implies it's their fault for having feelings.

Reachout.com suggests something like, "I understand you must have felt really upset, angry and confused."

5. Say sorry

Actually say you're sorry. "Don't tack a 'but...' onto the end of that sentence," warns Reachout.com.

6. Offer a solution

Tell them how you'll make things right. If you don't know how, ask them what they think will help.

7. Tell them it won't happen again

This is important. As Maralee McKee says, "Otherwise, what you've offered isn't an apology — it's an excuse."

8. Ask for forgiveness

Overtly ask for their forgiveness. Keep in mind they mightn't be ready yet.

9. Move forward with an intention of change

You can't do it again, and once they've forgiven you, they can't keep holding a grudge. ✕



WHAT'S INSIDE

What can and can't reduce inflammation	2
That wordless feeling of loss	4
Why women have more anxiety than men	5
Look out for your mates	6




10 September is World Suicide Prevention Day.

One in every 100 deaths worldwide is the result of suicide. Each and every suicide is devastating and has a profound impact on those around them. However, by raising awareness, reducing the stigma around suicide and encouraging well-informed action, we can reduce instances of suicide around the world. World Suicide Prevention Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of suicide and to promote action through proven means that will reduce the number of suicides and suicide attempts globally. Visit www.iasp.info/wspd2021 for more information.

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What can and can't **reduce** inflammation

You can't survive without me, yet I lie behind many of today's chronic diseases.

Inflammation has become a favourite topic of wellness bloggers and influencers. It's a scary sounding condition that's blamed for many common illnesses, often with justification but frequently without any strong evidence.

What is inflammation?

Inflammation is usually a good thing. Without it wounds and infections would never heal, spelling bad news for your survival.

An inflammatory response is the natural response of your immune system to any foreign invader or perceived threat, whether that's bacteria, viruses, parasites, fungi, or an injury.

You'll see acute inflammation in action if you cut or burn yourself. An influx of white blood cells and chemicals trigger redness and swelling – all part of your body's response that begins the healing process. Inflammation is also in action out of sight, fighting off disease, including the rogue cells that cause cancer. After the initial reaction, inflammation calms down to allow your body to heal.

Can inflammation work against us?

Yes, it can. Inflammation becomes a problem when it can't be turned off and

your body continues to react to something it sees as a threat.

Persistent, invisible, low levels of inflammation (known as chronic inflammation) can damage your body. It's linked to many long-term diseases including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's and some cancers. It plays a role in inflammatory bowel disease and is even believed to contribute to certain types of depression.

Inflammation is serious, but you can do something about it. It all starts with understanding what can cause it.

What causes chronic inflammation?

Viruses, autoimmune diseases like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, and pathogens the body can't get rid of can all cause inflammation. So too can:

- ageing
- smoking
- poor diet
- stress
- lack of sleep
- being overweight, particularly carrying weight around your middle.

What you can do

Your diet and lifestyle can go a long way to calming down chronic inflammation. Getting active for as little as 20 minutes every day can reduce chronic inflammation. So too can quitting smoking, getting adequate sleep, losing weight and reducing stress.

One of the most powerful tools you have to combat inflammation is your choice of food. Pick the wrong ones and you can accelerate inflammation. But choose the right foods and you can reduce your risk of illness.

"A pretty poor typical Western diet high in highly processed convenience foods and added sugar and low in minimally processed plant foods has been implicated in inflammation," says nutrition research scientist Dr Tim Crowe on his blog *Thinking Nutrition*.

"What is widely considered an 'anti-inflammatory diet' is one high in fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, legumes, and wholegrains," explains Dr Crowe. The Mediterranean style diet is a good example, especially if you include fish and olive oil, as it is rich in antioxidants and other inflammation-fighting nutrients.



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Why your gut matters

Of particular importance in your diet is dietary fibre. According to Dr Crowe fibre is the best fuel for our gut microbiome – the microbes that live in your large intestines. Your gut is home to most of your immune activity, making the microbiome a big player in fighting chronic inflammation.

Certain beneficial bacteria ferment fibre, producing a substance called butyric acid. This helps calm the immune response and improve the effectiveness of your gut barrier, stopping harmful pathogens from entering your body. Other beneficial microbes help fight off more inflammatory, gut damaging ones.

Because it provides nourishment for your gut bacteria, dietary fibre is one of the best anti-inflammatory foods you can eat. You'll find it in plant foods: fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, legumes, nuts and seeds. ✕

Inflammatory foods that aren't

Google 'inflammatory foods' and you'll likely come up with those high in refined carbohydrate, salt, sugar, and saturated fat.

Many of these come under the banner of 'ultra-processed foods' or junk foods and we could all do with eating less of these. They are both inflammatory and light on nutrients such as antioxidants and fibre that can help combat inflammation.

But search further and you may also uncover warnings against the following: nightshades, dairy and gluten. The evidence around these being inflammatory is weak at best.

Nightshade vegetables: these include white potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant and capsicum. Nightshades are an excellent source of nutrients, but some people believe that a chemical they contain called solanine may cause inflammation or make inflammation related to arthritis worse. There is no research to support that solanine has a direct effect on inflammation, but if you believe you are intolerant or allergic to nightshades it's worth seeing a dietitian for advice before eliminating them.

Dairy: dairy is much maligned online, where it's frequently outed as an inflammatory food. The story is actually the opposite of what the Internet proclaims, says Dr Crowe, citing a systematic review of 52 trials looking at dairy consumption and inflammation that found dairy had significant anti-inflammatory action.

There's no reason you have to include dairy in your diet, but don't cut it out because you believe it's inflammatory.

Gluten: gluten is a protein found in many grains including wheat, barley, oats and rye. It is only a problem if you have coeliac disease or a condition called non-coeliac gluten hypersensitivity. For the rest of us, there is no compelling evidence that a gluten-free diet will improve health or prevent disease, or that gluten causes inflammation. It may even cause the opposite. By cutting out all sources of gluten, you could miss out on wholegrains which contain antioxidants and fibre, both valuable inflammation-fighting nutrients.

“We’re talking about grieving a living loss—one that keeps going and going,” says Robert Neimeyer, PhD, director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition.

That wordless feeling of loss

So what can we do about it?

You don’t have to suffer alone. Here are ways to help manage this ambiguous grief and loss.

- 1. “Name and claim it,”** says Dr Neimeyer. It can help to give this “wordless suffering” a name, and know that it’s a feeling shared by so many.
- 2. Understand it.** It can help to understand that this kind of grief fluctuates. It’s perfectly normal to feel overwhelmed one day, and yet happy and grateful the next.
- 3. Keep social.** Do what you can to maintain your social supports. Even if you can’t see someone and hug them, it can help to stay connected online and by phone. Talk to your friends and family about ambiguous loss – you might be surprised by how they open up about their own experience.
- 4. Stop doom-scrolling.** When the news keeps updating with yet more suffering, it’s tempting to keep refreshing your news feed. It’s almost like we’re seeking control. Try to give yourself breaks from the news and limit yourself to a couple of checks a day for urgent updates.
- 5. Remember your strengths.** Look back on those times when you made it through tough situations, and remind yourself how resilient you are.

“Ambiguous loss”. It’s a vague but bone-deep sense of grief. It’s hard to define, and many people find it hard to justify when they ‘should be grateful’.

Yet you’ve probably felt it this past year with COVID, as you grieve the loss of your normal life and the loss of control.

The term ambiguous loss was coined by Dr Pauline Boss in the 1970s to cover the idea of ongoing losses that can’t be resolved, combined with an inability to return to “normal”. It was used to explain feelings around immigration, addiction, divorce and aging parents.

You can see why it applies so clearly to our experience of the COVID world. There is no foreseeable end, and it feels untenable and unsustainable.

Dr Sarah Woods, Assistant Professor and Director of Behavioural Health at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre, calls it “feelings of stress, sorrow, and frustration we feel at the loss of our normal lives.

“The first thing to know is that feeling distressed due to ambiguity is normal,” says Dr Wood. “The complicated grief we’re

experiencing due to the shifting sands of our current lives, and the accumulation of impalpable losses, is valid.”

If you’re feeling stressed, it’s not your fault

We’re seeing our old world-order destabilise. Our work, education and our economy – it’s all rocky and uncertain right now.

Robert Neimeyer, PhD, director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition and professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Memphis, says, “The losses include our sense of predictability, control, justice, and the belief that we can protect our children or elderly loved ones,”

Dr Neimeyer points out that the level of grief we feel is usually connected to our level of attachment to the thing we’ve lost.

“We’re capable of losing places, projects, possessions, professions and protections, all of which we may be powerfully attached to,” he says. “This pandemic forces us to confront the frailty of such attachments, whether it’s to our local bookstore or the routines that sustain us through our days. We’re talking about grieving a living loss – one that keeps going and going.” ✕



Why women have more anxiety than men

When it comes to some mental health conditions, particularly anxiety, it matters whether you're male or female.

Women are almost twice as likely to experience anxiety as men, says a 2016 University of Cambridge review of studies. The Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Survey from 2017-2018 had similar findings: women were more likely than men to experience high levels of psychological distress, anxiety-related conditions and depression.

Why women?

Biology can explain only some of the differences.

Hormonal changes across a woman's life – during puberty, the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and menopause – have been linked to anxiety. Women also tend to be more prone to stress and to have different coping mechanisms than men. They are more likely to spend more time thinking about life stressors, say University of Cambridge researchers, which can increase anxiety, while men tend to engage more in active, problem-focused coping.

But there are certain life events that can

particularly affect women. Beyond Blue and Jean Hailes have identified a number of factors that can impact women's mental health, including:

- **Caring for others.** Women do most of the caregiving, whether for a partner, elderly parents, and/or children. While it can be a very positive experience for many, caring can affect your physical and mental health, financial security and independence, particularly if caring for people who are ill, frail or with a disability.
- **Infertility and miscarriage.** The grief and loss of infertility and miscarriage can be devastating for women and is often experienced privately, which can further impact mental health.
- **Pregnancy, having a baby and becoming a mother.** For some women, adjusting to the major life change and challenges of early motherhood leaves them more likely to experience depression and anxiety.
- **Menopause.** Hormone changes in the years leading to menopause can contribute to depression and anxiety. The physical changes of menopause – hot flushes, night sweats, interrupted sleep and weight gain – can also impact mental health.

Words to replace anxious thoughts

Next time you have the thought “I can't do this” or “this is going to be awful” replace it with a different phrase to help reduce your anxiety. Choose words you use regularly and are important to you – the list below from Jean Hailes can get you started. Repeat the words at least seven times each day when you remember, or when you notice the signs and symptoms of anxiety.

- I am okay.
- I can do this.
- I am peaceful and at ease.
- I am calm.
- I have the strength to deal with anxiety.
- I let go of anxiety.
- I am strong.
- I am dealing with anxiety.
- My anxieties are thoughts, not reality.
- I am letting go of all I cannot control.
- I am accepting of my anxieties – they are just thoughts.

For more information on women and anxiety visit jeanhailes.org.au

- **Relationships.** Conflict at home, particularly physical and mental abuse, can cause great fear and anxiety. Women who are separated, divorced or widowed are more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. As well as feelings of loss and grief, the end of a relationship can affect financial security, social connections, housing and relationships with children.
- **Money worries.** Stress over money is common and can affect your mental wellbeing. According to a recent BlackRock study focusing on the relationship between wealth and wellbeing, money is a top worry amongst the 27,000 people they asked worldwide. In many of these cases, women indicated that finances caused higher levels of stress than men did. ✕

Look out for your mates

Many people often think of workplace safety as something their employer should do for them. However, as an employee, you have a legal responsibility too.

In fact, in many countries you can actually be charged with 'reckless endangerment', or the local equivalent.

In most countries the offence of reckless endangerment or similar applies to everyone – an employer, a worker, a designer, manufacturer, supplier or installer, even a member of the public.

In Australia for example, the 2004 OHS Act states: "A person who, without lawful excuse recklessly engages in conduct that places or may place another person who is at a workplace in danger of serious injury is guilty of an indictable offence." While the offence has a potential penalty of imprisonment of up to five years, the law is there to reinforce the age-old maxim of "think of others". This is also the case in most places.

It's all tied in with the idea that we should look out for our friends and colleagues, and do our best to make sure our own actions don't cause harm.

While the exact wording of workplace safety legislation differs in each country, the general idea is that you must:

- take reasonable care for your own health and safety
- take reasonable care for the health and safety of others who may be affected by your acts or omissions
- cooperate with anything the employer does to comply with workplace health and safety requirements

- not 'intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse' anything provided at the workplace for workplace health and safety.

This applies to all workers including employees, trainees, apprentices or work experience students, volunteers, outworkers, contractors or sub-contractors, employees of a contractor or sub-contractor, and employees of a labour hire company.

Extra care required for COVID

These laws have even more relevance than ever with COVID.

According to Safe Work Australia, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important that you:

- work safely and observe any new requirements for physical distancing (even if it means performing tasks in a different way to what you are used to)
- follow instructions (e.g. about how to wash hands thoroughly)
- ask if you're not sure how to safely perform the work
- use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves in the way you were trained and instructed to use it, and
- report any unsafe or unhealthy situations (e.g. a lack of soap in the bathroom) to your supervisor or to your health and safety representative.

You should check with your workplace if they have any special requirements for COVID safety. ✕



Ask an expert about ...

Kamal Sarma, the Chair of the R U OK? Conversation Think Tank, says it's normal to be unsure what to do when you get a NO answer. He says it's important to remember that you're not there for your mate as a trained therapist. "All we need to do is be present to their pain."

"Our job is not to fix them, our job is to make sure that we listen to them, that we take an interest and see what we can do to encourage action," he says.

In terms of what to say when someone answers No, Sarma suggests using

Q What happens if you ask a friend 'Are you OK?', and the answer is 'no'? We've turned to some experts for their advice.

general prompts such as, "Tell me more".

It's important to give the person space to think and answer, says Sarma. "Don't jump in straight away with an idea or thought. Let them unfurl."

Dr Michelle Lim, Scientific Chair of Ending Loneliness Together, recommends always asking, "What can I do?"

She says we shouldn't assume we know what will make our friend feel better. We need to ask them.

"People sometimes fall into a trap of trying to resolve someone's problems, or offering

recommendations that may not be helpful," she says.

Dr Lim suggests simply asking what you can do to help even if it's just to help them have a better day today. ✕

R U OK is an initiative aimed at encouraging all of us to notice the signs of mental health struggle in friends, family, and colleagues, and start meaningful conversations that offer support and care to those in need. While it is Australian, with World Suicide Prevention Day on the 10th of September, it is important to know that the principle behind R U OK Day can be applied anywhere, and at any time.

App
of the
month

Pocket

Seen an article online that you'd like to read but don't have time? Then save it to Pocket. You can save the latest news, magazine articles, stories, ideas, recipes, web pages – anything you discover online. If it's in your Pocket, you can access it on your phone, tablet and computer, even when you're offline. Pocket has a clean layout and customisable display that makes for a relaxing read. If you love to read before bed, there are dark and sepia themes that reduce visual stimulation before you sleep.

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Alcohol's link to cancer

Can you name some of the biggest risk factors for cancer? Smoking, poor nutrition and too much sun might come to mind. So, too, should alcohol.

According a recent study in The Lancet, over 700,000 of all new cases of cancer in 2020 were attributable to alcohol consumption.

But a recent survey by the Cancer Council of Australia of 1500 people found less than one-fifth of people identify alcohol as being a cancer risk. That's despite the fact it's linked to at least seven types of cancers.

Only 18 per cent knew alcohol could cause breast cancer, a quarter knew it could cause throat and mouth cancers, and just under half were aware it could cause bowel cancer.

Professor Kate Conigrave, a University of Sydney addiction medicine specialist who helped develop the new alcohol guidelines, explains that alcohol increases the risk of getting cancer from quite low levels of drinking, and steadily rises the more you drink.

It's a good idea to check your local alcohol guidelines as they differ from country to country. ✕

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Coffee may benefit
your bones

Good news for coffee lovers concerned their habit could be harming their bones.

While studies in the past have produced conflicting results about coffee and bone health, a recent study published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* found that people who habitually drank coffee had higher bone mass density than non-coffee drinkers. They found that three substances in coffee appeared to be good for bone health, by increasing bone density and decreasing the risk of fractures. ✕

What to ask someone
other than “What do
you do?”

When you meet someone new through work and have to build rapport quickly, many of us resort to: “What do you do?”.

This might not be the best way to build rapport with someone else, says David Burkus, Associate Professor of Leadership and Innovation at Oral Roberts University.

Research suggests that we tend to prefer and seek out relationships where there is more than one context for connecting with the other person. And how do you discover that? By asking the right questions, says Burkus.

Start by asking something deliberately non-work related. Burkus suggests the following:

What excites you right now? Answers could range from the work-related, kids, a new car, or weekly bushwalk.

What are you looking forward to? This allows the other person to choose from a bigger set of possible answers.

What's the best thing that happened to you this year? This again gives the other person a larger set of possible answers.

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THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Set yourself a squat challenge

If you're looking for an exercise that delivers great results without going to a gym or using weights, look no further than the bodyweight squat.

Doing regular squats will work your quadriceps and glutes while forcing your core to engage and upper body to stabilise. Other benefits may include greater strength and tone in your back and calf muscles, plus improved ankle mobility and stability.

But squats offer so much more, discovered UK journalist Dr Michael Mosley. He spoke to Professor Damian Bailey from the University of South Wales, who has been researching the effects of exercise on the brain.

Professor Bailey believes one of the best exercises you can do to boost your brain power is the simple squat as it helps drive the flow of blood to the brain. As we age, and particularly if we're inactive, blood flow and oxygen delivery to the brain decrease, affecting our ability to think and remember.

How to do a squat:

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, feet facing forwards and hands stretched out in front or crossed at the chest.
- Bend your knees as if sitting down on a chair. Go as far as feels comfortable, aiming to get your thighs parallel to the floor. Slowly rise up to the starting position.
- During the move, keep your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and core engaged. Don't let your knees extend over your toes. Repeat 8-10 times.

If your knees hurt when doing squats, see a physiotherapist for advice. ✕

EAT SMARTER

Natural yoghurt

Dolloped on a hot chilli or mixed with your morning muesli, natural yoghurt is not only a versatile ingredient in the kitchen, it's a sure-fire way to help keep bones strong and support your gut health. It's full of health-giving properties such as:

Calcium. The mineral calcium is essential for strong bones and to prevent the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis. Don't dismiss osteoporosis as just a problem of old age. Your lifestyle choices when you're younger (including plenty of exercise and a calcium-rich diet) will help protect you from developing fragile bones when you're older.

Dairy foods, including yoghurt, are a rich source of calcium but there can be wide variations in calcium levels in different products.

"This often comes down to the difference in processing methods," accredited practising dietitian Kate Gudorf told *Choice* magazine.

"Some manufacturers add extra milk solids, which add calcium. Others, such as strained Greek yoghurt, remove liquid whey, which reduces calcium levels." Look for a yoghurt that contains at least 200mg of calcium per serving.

Protein. Your bones also need enough protein to stay strong. A low protein intake can decrease calcium absorption and affect rates of bone formation. Yoghurt, particularly Greek yoghurt, is richer in protein than regular milk.

Probiotics. The bacteria used to make yoghurt may benefit your health by aiding digestion and supporting immune function. Choose a natural yoghurt that specifies the type and quantity of bacteria (probiotics), as not all yoghurts contain viable quantities.

World Osteoporosis Day is on 20 October. ✕



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