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The Power of Apology in Mediation

Jane Brody, who writes a column for the Science Times on Tuesdays, recently wrote a wonderful piece about apologies and their impact on people's relationships as well as their health.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/well/mind/the-right-way-to-say-im-sorry.html>

She argues that while holding onto anger can be injurious to both parties, a poorly worded apology might cause more harm than good.

She goes on to state that that effective apologies should be sincere and one-sided- no quid pro quo should be required or requested.



Hon. Stephanie H.
Klein (Ret.)

Merely apologizing for hurting another is not enough.

Brody illustrates her view by recounting an incident where she accidentally offended a neighbor. She wrote a note, apologizing for her behavior, specifically not asking for forgiveness, but hoping that somehow they could resume a civil relationship. To her surprise, her neighbor responded with warmth and friendship. The apology not only remediated the conflict, but also restored the friendship.

What does this have to do with mediation? A sincere apology without seeking forgiveness may be a good first step. But most parties are not willing to apologize without knowing the other party will apologize too- the infernal quid pro quo that Brody eschews. However, I have found that those mutual apologies, with great respect to Jane Brody, are often a first step towards communication. And even that small apology is often a fine start to mediation. Acknowledging the pain that we have caused can commence sufficient healing of a deep wound to allow listening to the other disputant. And that is the beginning of trying to work things out, or mediation. [READ MORE](#)

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