

Making Apologies or Making Amends?

Apologies are Just acknowledgements.

By Rick R.

Over the years I have attended many different types of A.A. meetings, and I have noticed that I seem to find myself drawn towards the ones that are literature based more than the meetings that seem to have a wide-open topic approach. I find it more direct and constructive when the things that I share about are based on A.A. principles and I can refer to the line or lines in the 12&12 or the Big Book, or in the Daily reflections, that *back up* the things I share with others, rather than just shooting from the hip on what "I think" about the topic.

As we are making lists and inventories and searching for the right approach to complete the process of identifying our problems and formulating a path that we can take to correct them, I do not think there is any wrong way to do it, after all, it is just a list. I do, however, sometimes think that there may be a better, more thorough way to accomplish it. The good thing about this is that as we get more evolved in this process, we can always revisit these issues and improve on them. Often, when someone skimps on their fifth step, they may be encouraged to go back and revisit the fifth step, otherwise they are not likely to ever have peace of mind. When we make amends, we bring those issues to their natural conclusion, and they do not torment us anymore. The cat's out of the bag, so to speak. What does it mean when we say, *making amends*? I once heard a woman sharing, she was having trouble making amends to her father; that it was too difficult. She said that her sponsor advised her to just make living amends. It was implied that she did not have to address it with her father and that she could just do something kind for others and that would make it even. The sponsor was well meaning but, I believe, somewhat misguided in her advice. Sidetracking the issue will never rid your mind of the matter and bring it to a close. It will be in your memory for as long as you have a memory and that is not good. When I was first faced with the prospect and the challenge of inventories and amends, I viewed them as penance or punishment, not unlike donning an orange jumpsuit and picking up trash along the highway. After having gone through the process and reaping the benefit of that experience I now see it as a means of cleaning out the attic and ridding myself of those tormenting ghosts of yesterday. One by one I put issue after issue to rest and as a result, they no longer keep me awake nights wrestling with ways I might circumvent this ego crushing exercise.

The other thing that I want to address is the idea that apologizing for something is making amends. To me, apologizing is simply acknowledging that we have made a mistake, but if we have not mended that behavior, and are still making that mistake with others, we have not mended anything. An example of a sincere amend might go like this: *I apologize for what I did, it has bothered me ever since, and I am truly sorry, and you can rest assured that I do not do that anymore. What can I do to make it right?*

Carrying the dead weight from past misdeeds around in our heads is no way to live. If you can muster the strength to address them one at a time you can rid yourself of all that mental discomfort and you can experience the promise: we will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. Can you say that for yourself, now? *All amends are living amends and apologies are only acknowledgements.*