

## Hearing Anger and Expressing Regret

**Often when we catch ourselves in the wrong, we turn towards feeling intense shame and apologising profusely. With the best of our intention at heart, we somehow manage to still direct the attention from the other person's anger to our own shame and guilt. In such instances our apology might be met with even more anger and result in disconnection with the other person.**

When a person is angry with us about something we may have said or done, we typically have three options available:

**Receive their anger with empathy:** We turn the focus towards deeply listening to their feelings and needs and really seeing their pain and acknowledging the impact of our behavior.

### **Exercise for receiving someone's anger:**

1. Share a message that you found really difficult to hear about yourself with your group
2. Practise a role play whereby one of the group members (Person A) repeats that message for you in an even vehement manner
3. You can ask for specific observations (optional and to be used in situations when you don't really know what you have said or done that is creating such an impact on the other person) and then share your sensing of the feelings and needs of the person A as they deliver the message
4. Person A and the other group members can you give feedback about how your empathic guesses landed on them and if they felt the genuineness of their empathy.

**Engage in self-empathy/self-connection:** When you are at the receiving end of someone's anger, sometimes you may notice a lot of self-judgements come up for you that may make it difficult for you to be with the other person. In such instances, it might be helpful to turn the camera inwards and become curious about yourself so that you can learn from your experience.

### **Exercise for self-empathy/self-connection:**

- What did I do or say which I now wish I hadn't?
- What thoughts do I have of myself for having done or said that?
- What do these thoughts indicate about my present needs, i.e. what needs of mine are not met from having done or said that?
- What feelings come up for me when I sit with these needs?
- What need was I trying to meet when I did or said what I did?
- Given my current awareness of both sets of needs – my present needs as well as the needs I was trying to meet at that time – how might I have chosen differently, or how would I choose differently in a future situation.

**Express regret:** Unlike an apology, whereby we are seeking forgiveness for our mistake and just wanting to move on, expression of regret is a slow process that involves taking the other person in our world. It involves acknowledging the impact of our behavior and also embracing our humanity. It involves dropping the right/wrong thinking and inviting the other person in a space of deep connection with us. It involves risking sharing your vulnerability and the totality of your experience.

**Exercise for expressing regret:**

- A. Speaker: practices expressing a regret, a “mistake”
- B. Listener: in role-play, reflects back what he/she hears speaker say
- C. Coach: coaches and offers feedback to speaker and/or listener

**Speaker**

1. I’m feeling \_\_\_\_\_ (regretful, sad, embarrassed).
2. Right now I’m wanting \_\_\_\_\_ (in your own words, something like: to express myself, to heal with you, to make amends and get back on track with you.)
3. Would you be willing to listen?
4. (Observation) What I did or said that I now regret is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. (Feelings) At the time I did/said those things, I was feeling\_\_\_\_\_.
6. (Needs attempting to meet) I was trying to meet my needs and values for\_\_\_\_\_.
7. (Needs not met) However, in saying/doing those things, I was not meeting my needs or living my values for \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What I wish I would have said/done at the time instead would have been\_\_\_\_\_.
9. (Request) Would you tell me what you’re feeling when you hear my regrets and hear what I wish I would have done/said?

**Listener**

1. Reflect back feelings and needs that you hear in speaker’s message.
2. Share your response when asked by speaker to respond.

**Coach**

1. Offer coaching to help speaker/listener stay on track with OFNR.
2. At end of the speaker/listener exchange, offer any feedback to speaker/listener, in supporting their integrating OFNR.
3. Invite speaker to share how it was to express his/her regret in this way and to be heard by listener.
4. Invite listener to give feedback on how it was to hear the speaker express their regret in this way.