

Seven for the Punch List

A field guide for the apology you actually mean.

I grew up religious. I read the Bible cover to cover before I was twenty. The number seven is in there everywhere.....six days of work, the seventh of rest, seventy times seven for forgiveness. Seven means complete. I'm also a carpenter. I know what it is to walk a job one more time before I sign off on it. The seventh step on this list is the same instinct. One more pass. One more thing I can consider for the other person before I say that's my best. Then I rest.

JHÖL UNGER

THE SEVEN STEPS

1

APOLOGIZE TO YOURSELF FIRST.

Before you say one word to anyone else, take your hundred percent of your half. In private. With no audience. The only apology that lands for someone else is one written by a person who has already made peace with their own conduct.

2

EXPRESS REGRET.

Name the hurt. Don't bury it. Don't soften it. "I am sorry" with no "but" attached.

3

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY.

Say you were wrong. No deflection. No explanations dressed up as ownership. The hardest of the five for most people. Do it anyway.

4

MAKE RESTITUTION.

Bring receipts. Action you have already taken. Don't ask what they want you to do. Show what you've already done.

5

PLAN CHANGE.

Name what's open. Don't demand a date. Don't set terms. Leave the door open on their timeline, not yours.

6

DON'T ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.

Most apologies that don't work are demands disguised as apologies. Asking for forgiveness makes it about you again. Give the gift. Ask for nothing back.

THE PUNCH LIST.

Walk the building one more time. Ask yourself one question: Is there one more thing I can consider for the other person before I call this complete? When the answer is no, you can rest.

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