

CONFESSing: Seeking Forgiveness

Coming to terms with our suffering or anger through forgiveness can have a positive impact on our mental well-being.

The decision to forgive is a personal one, but seeking forgiveness can be a first step in reconciling positive relationships when an individual believes they have hurt someone else.

CONFESSing, or seeking forgiveness, involves seven elements. These are important when an individual wants to communicate that they are in the wrong:

- **Confessing** to the wrongdoing, being specific, and without offering excuses.
- **Offering** a genuine apology
- **Noting** the other's pain
- **Forever valuing** your relationship with them
- **Equalizing**, or balancing the scales
- **Saying** you will never repeat the wrong or attempt to hurt the other person, and
- **Seeking forgiveness** by explicitly asking for it.

The CONFESS model was proposed by Everett L. Worthington (2006).

Confessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Confess to the wrong without attempting to make excuses for it. ■ Specifically outline what the transgression was in your confession of remorse.
Offering an Apology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offer a genuine, heartfelt apology. When apologizing, note your accountability for the offense or injustice. ■ Remember to express your remorse and contrition when making your apology - if you feel guilt, shame, or disappointment, communicate this, too. ■ Express your sorrow or sadness for the actions in question.
Noting Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Empathize with the other person by noting their pain - demonstrate that you understand their suffering. ■ Acknowledge, even describe, how you feel their suffering to show that you understand their feelings and perspectives. ■ If possible, identify with the other person - have you ever felt the way that they are feeling now? How was that experience?
Forever Valuing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Forever valuing your relationship means that reconciliation is more important to you than winning, being right, or feeling less guilty. ■ Express what repairing your relationship means to you - what are you willing to do to make things better? To regain their trust?

Equalizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Communicate your willingness to rebalance the scales. Is there anything you can do to compensate for the transgression? ■ Try to avoid suggesting different means of restitution - each person is different and your perceived equalizer may not be relevant. ■ Equalizing means more than offering to repair the damage. Be genuine and willing to follow through with any suggestions they make, or any resolutions that you settle on through compromise.
Saying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Explicitly state that you will never do it again. ■ If you mean it, specifically express that you will never try to hurt the other person the same way in future.
Seeking Forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seek forgiveness explicitly and verbally. ■ Ask for forgiveness outright in meaningful words, for example: "<i>Can you ever forgive me for hurting you?</i>"

Sources:

- Worthington Jr, E. L. (2006). *Forgiveness and reconciliation: Theory and application*. Routledge.