

Saying 'sorry' soothes souls

Apologizing is an important first step in intra- and international relations.

While attending a conference in Switzerland this summer I had the opportunity to hear a talk on the subject of apology. I did not intend on listening to that lecture. But I went anyway,



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prepared for a boring afternoon that would likely include a brief nap. What I heard, though, was remarkable enough to keep me both awake and interested.

The context of the conference was global, and so the talk was given from an international perspective. I will discuss that aspect later. The talk I heard was called "The Power of Apology." Now when I think of apology, 'power' is not the first word that comes to mind. I normally think of humility, admission of guilt and shame.

In spite of that, the lecturer spoke about the power inherent in an apology, if the apology is given in a sincere and truthful manner.

Listen carefully, because this is good advice for the rest of our lives. An apology must never be conditional. Therefore, you should never say, "I'm sorry if I offended you..." or "I apologize, but..." It must always include the reason for the grievance and be followed by an offering for peace and reconciliation. That way, the past is addressed, the present is before you, and there is a clear path for a hopeful future.

There really is power in apology. It has the power to prevent little annoyances from piling up on one another until the weight of all combined is too much to bear and the situation explodes. Apology contains the power to mend broken friendships far quicker than anything else. It also possesses the power to bring hope to a seemingly hopeless situation. Finally, apology has the amazing ability to strengthen each of us every time we make use of it.

Now, there is plenty there to set you thinking, I hope, about a relationship you have that could possibly be in need of apology, but I want to provide a larger, global demonstration of the power of apology. As I mentioned earlier, I learned this all at a conference this summer entitled "Agenda for Reconciliation." Now, unlike most conferences I have attended in the past, this was not merely a collection of intellectuals or social activists, but rather a mixture of those folks with people who were in dire need of reconciliation. Before the conference began, our leaders

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explained to us that in the following week, individuals would arrive who would be unlike anyone that we have met. Their identities would be secret and their discussion closed but we would be allowed to engage them in conversation. The people that came were from Sierra Leone, the poorest country on our planet, and one embroiled in brutal conflict. Those that arrived were not merely citizens, but rather high-level government officials and upper echelon rebel leaders.

These were men and women who the previous week had been shooting at one another, but had agreed to lay down their arms to come to Switzerland and talk.

I expected to see a group walking around who reminded me of Rambo, but they looked, spoke, and acted just like you and me. I do not know the content of what was discussed in their room, but I can give a brief update on the conflict ravaging Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is a tiny country, but about half its land is fully in control of the rebel forces, Revolutionary United Front. Most of us have probably never seen Sierra Leone, or maybe even heard of it, but I guarantee you have seen a product of Sierra Leone, which is a source of their conflict - diamonds.

The rebel forces control many of the diamond mines and run them as slave operations. There is a strong connection between the illicit diamond trade and the black market arms trade there. So, there is constant fighting between the rebel forces and the government that is trying to maintain control over a virtually uncontrollable situation.

These were the men and women who sat down at a table in Switzerland to discuss their differences. I know that there were many apologies made and reconciliation was begun.

At the close of the conference, we all attended a final plenary session where the Defense Minister for Sierra Leone rose to make a speech. He said there was a man in the room who, had he seen him last week, he would have shot him and vice-versa. He asked that man, one of the top rebel leaders to stand.

Then he called him to the stage, and I will close with his final remark, which left the room in awe and filled with hope. He said, as the rebel leader approached the stage, "Observe the power of reconciliation." They embraced.

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Split politics benefit campus

Liberal faculty and clubs balance more conservative students.

What is it with Wake Forest? The school that was founded on solid, fundamentalist Baptist values in northern Wake County has changed to a school that shares a historical relationship with



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Our college is unique in that, while maintaining a liberal identity through the selection of most faculty members, particularly in the liberal arts, the school as a whole has remained at least partly conservative in the student body and administrative fields. This dichotomy has not been replicated to such an extent at the so-called cross admit institutions.

administration's targeted tax cuts.

For the most part, the faculty is pretty liberal. Anybody who has heard some of the more celebrated faculty members speak can certainly attest to that. The student body, in contrast, is a mixture of the extremes. Our conservatives are definitely conservative, but our liberals are very liberal. The mixture, however, is fairly even. There is not an overwhelming voice raised in either direction at this point. I would argue that this is a rarity in the world of top-tier colleges and universities, and I wonder what implications it has in the formation of Wake Forest as a place of learning.

For one example of what it may be like to be at another campus, let's examine the recent news story about conservative students at several Northeastern schools. If memory serves me correctly, conservative students at a northeastern, traditionally liberal school sued for seats on Student Government councils and other positions within the school's power structure based on a quota system that was already in place for minorities. Their argument was that, as conservatives, they were already in at least the same minority as an African American student at the school, and as such, deserved representation.

While I agree wholeheartedly with their argument, that if they are indeed in the minority they deserve the same consideration as other minority students, I still question how this would play out on other college campuses around the country.

Can you imagine a liberal suing for a seat on a student government council at Liberty University? Can you imagine a white student demanding representation at Tuskegee University? Can you imagine a female cadet demanding

special treatment from the Citadel? These are cases where, despite what is seen by many as our lack of diversity, Wake Forest shines in comparison.

At this university, we have people from every social stratum, but none of them are welfare cases taken on for the purposes of diversity. At this institution, we have minorities. While the percentage is not yet up to the national average, the fact remains that minority students are admitted based on, as far as I can see, the same standards as everyone else.

At Wake Forest, we enjoy fairly liberated view of inter-gender relationships.

Try finding another Southern Baptist college with coed dorms if you don't believe me.

Our college is unique in that, while maintaining a liberal identity through the selection of most faculty members, particularly in the liberal arts, the school as a whole has remained at least partly conservative in the student body and administrative fields. This dichotomy has not been replicated to such an extent at the so-called cross-admit institutions, and they demonstrate it with antics such as the demand for minority seats for conservatives.

While the campus may not have students from every possible ethnic background, or even every one of the 50 states, I believe that the campus is dedicated to being diverse where it counts: in ideology. Wake maintains a strong liberal presence, as exemplified by the social activism of the students in the 1960s anti-war demonstrations and the social activism of the coalition against the war in Iraq organized this semester.

The university maintains a strong conservative presence as well, with organizations like the College Republicans filling up, and traditionally conservative new organizations like Ducks Unlimited starting as well.

Conservatism and liberalism are alive and well at Wake Forest in nearly equal amounts, which benefits everyone.

Considering the alternatives, I'm extremely happy with the balance, especially as I am exposed to more and more people who I believe are genuinely committed to their principles and who have great ideas, even when I don't agree with those ideas.

Chris Plumlee is a junior communications major.

Choices excused by alcohol?

Alcohol-related excuses mask students' true intentions, deny real motivation of their actions.

I don't know why the weekends are becoming such an inspiration for my writing, but this week I write about communication and taking responsibility. My question is why it takes mind-altering substances, such as alcohol, in order for a guy or girl to communicate his/her true feelings to someone. You said it, you meant it, but you go ahead and deny it.



Jenny Billings

OLD GOLD AND BLACK COLUMNIST

Being real is living with and learning from your mistakes. Being real is not having to get disgustingly drunk in order to have a good time.

Maybe a little too perfect because you have an excuse? Well, not anymore. Most likely, you even have some recollection of it and you just don't want to admit it.

I see it all the time around campus and back home. Guys who have problems with each other just ignore one another on a regular basis. They don't even look at each other during the day. But as soon as one of them is a little messed up, it is then that they scream and attempt to fight. What gives? They can't just continue the ignoring cycle, or better yet, discuss it like grown men. That would be too easy, too responsible. This happens with girls, too. Girls start running their mouths because we think we are invincible, or sadly, cool in this state, and then it backfires in our face because it gets back to the person. Of course it is going to! This is Wake Forest. It is a small school with gossip just like in high school. You cannot escape anyone on this campus whether you want to or not. You and I both know that. So why do we try and trick ourselves into believing otherwise?

My personal favorite is the girl or guy that says that he/she didn't mean to hook up with a certain person. I'm sorry, but hook ups don't just randomly happen. Somewhere, in the back of your mind maybe, there was a motive. The alcohol just made it more real, right? What is real? That you now have a reputation? That you now partake in the walk of shame? That you have an STD? What does it mean to be real? Being real is taking responsibility for your actions whether you are under the influence or not. Being real means admitting that you had a motive for what you did. Being real means living with and learning from your mistakes. Being real means not having to get disgustingly drunk in order to have a good time. Real is not having to look macho or easy in order to meet people. Being real means communicating what you really feel all the time. Being real means you state your opinion and stand up for it.

Are you real?
Jenny Billings is a freshman.

