

Avoiding Conflict: Week 2

Month: Sept.

Week #: 5

Day: b. Tues. Time: 30 min.

A Strong Person Says 'Sorry!'

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

Objectives/Aims

The students will: understand why it is important to accept responsibility for our actions and apologize. Conversely, students will learn how to graciously accept other people's apologies.

Materials

none

Illustration

Not to long ago these two students had a big fight! Now they are smiling and shaking hands. I wonder what they did to solve this problem and stay friends?



July 7
2009
Lucas
Boris-
Holcomb

Background

Given that we have finite knowledge, a tendency towards self-centeredness and other assorted human weaknesses, we will make mistakes and offend and hurt others from time to time. What often exacerbates the situation and causes a conflict is when we don't or won't 'own up' to our mistakes. This pride is often what stands in the way of actually healing the situation.

Recognizing that we will need to

apologize from time to time should make it easier to graciously accept other people's apologies. Along with this recognition is the realization that it is not easy to apologize. We should not endeavor to 'rub someone's face in the dirt' when that person is courageous enough to admit fault.

Group Activity

1. Ask the students who George Washington was, and then either tell, or act out the following story about George Washington and the cherry tree (this did not actually happen, but it does teach several important truths).

Note: In this story the original intent of the author was to teach a moral lesson about telling the truth. I've expanded upon this moral lesson by including a formal apology by George and the resultant forgiveness by his father. I believe that M. L Weems, being a preacher, would accept such a logical extension of his work. All additions that I have made to the original text are indicated by [brackets].

The Cherry Tree

by M. L. Weems

When George was about six years old, he was made the wealthy master of a hatchet of which, like most little boys, he was extremely fond. He went about chopping everything that came his way.

One day, as he wandered about the garden amusing himself by hacking his mother's pea sticks, he found a beautiful, young English cherry tree, of which his father was most proud. He tried the edge of his hatchet on the trunk of the tree and barked it so that it died.

Some time after this, his father discovered what had happened to his favorite tree. He came into the house in great anger, and demanded to know who the mischievous person was who had cut away the bark. Nobody could tell him anything about it. Just then George, with his little hatchet, came into the room.

"George," said his father, "do you know who has killed my beautiful little cherry tree yonder in the garden? I would not have taken five guineas for it!"

This was a hard question to answer, and for a moment George was staggered by it, but quickly recovering himself he cried:

"I cannot tell a lie, father, you know I cannot tell a lie! I did cut it with my little hatchet. [I'm very, very sorry!]"

The anger died out of his father's face, and taking the boy tenderly in his arms, he said:

"My son, that you should not be afraid to tell the truth is more to me than a thousand trees! Yes - though they were blossomed with silver and had leaves of the purest gold! [Furthermore, I accept your apology and forgive you for the mistake that you made!]"

Group Discussion Questions

1. Did George make a mistake? What was his mistake? How many of you, by a show of hands, have ever made a mistake?

A: Since we are human, we will all make mistakes and offend and hurt others from time to time.

2. Raise your hands when you agree. When his father confronted him with his mistake did he: Blame it on someone else? Run away and hide? Lie and say that he didn't do it? Act like a strong person and accept responsibility for his behavior by apologizing?

A: Act like a strong person and accept responsibility for his behavior by apologizing.

3. By accepting responsibility for his behavior and apologizing, do you think he healed his relationship with father?

A: Yes, since his father forgave him, although there might have been some other consequences that George would have to accept in order to totally heal the situation. For example, he might have had to plant another tree, lose the use of the ax, etc.

4. What do you think this story is teaching us?

A: That if the father of our country can make mistakes, so can we.

A: A strong person takes responsibility for his actions and apologizes.

A: One way to prevent or heal a conflict is to apologize.

A: It is important to accept another person's apology graciously.

Variations/Extensions

1. Act out the story using people puppets.
2. Either tell stories about, or act out modern day scenarios, in which people need to accept responsibility for their actions and apologize.

Conclusion

Say, "George Washington was a very strong person, not so much in physical strength, but in moral character. He took responsibility for his actions and apologized. If you choose to, you can be like him. And like his father, you can accept other people's apologies graciously."



July 7
2009
Dear
Baris -
Helmi

Not too long ago these two students had a big fight! Now they are smiling and shaking hands. I wonder what they did to solve this problem and stay friends?