

Session #R15
How To Say
“I’m Sorry”
When Things Go Wrong

Kenita Hill:

Kenita has over 20 years of experience in long-term care. Her extensive background includes being certified as a professional in healthcare risk management (CPHRM), a licensed nursing home administrator and an LPN. Kenita holds a Master's degree in Health Services Administration from Central Michigan University and dual Bachelor's degrees in Health Planning and Management and Business Administration from Alfred University. Kenita is currently responsible for conducting risk management assessments, employee climate assessments and providing staff training in Skilled Nursing Facilities and Assisted Living Facilities located across the U.S.

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Objectives:

- Participants will be able to summarize the philosophy behind 'I'm Sorry' Laws.
- Participants will be able to give examples on how to respond to some common complaints and concerns that arise in long term care communities.
- Participants will be able to list what NOT to say during an apology.

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Why Apologize?

- Studies have shown that the main reason residents and their families sue when something goes wrong is because they want to know what happened.
- An honest and compassionate apology versus incomplete and evasive explanations results in an improved relationship between the healthcare provider and resident.
- Properly expressing sympathy following an incident can go a long way to de-escalating a situation and preventing a claim.

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“I’m Sorry Law”

The “I’m Sorry Law” provides healthcare professionals with an opportunity to express sympathy to a resident for an unexpected outcome of care provided. The law was developed to decrease the number of malpractice claims resulting from lack of communication between the healthcare provider and the resident.

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States That Have Adopted The “I’m Sorry Law”

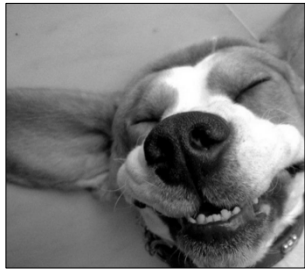
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- North Carolina
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- Oregon
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wyoming
- District of Columbia

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HA!!! WE GOT YA, DIDN'T WE?

Be honest, you were expecting another sad doggy face.

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Apology Guidelines

- Respond quickly – within 24 hours
- Choose right setting
- Show remorse
- Don't offer excuses
- LISTEN
- Follow up!
- Leave the door open for future communication – offer your cell phone number

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Things To Avoid During An Apology

- Blaming others or finger pointing
- Inserting the word "but" during apology
- Focusing on how bad you or your staff feel
- Overpromising

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Examples of what to say and what

NOT

to say...

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This piece of furniture is broken and no one is doing anything about it!

- I'm so sorry. I'll call the Maintenance Director and ask them to replace it right away. I'll check back to be sure this has been addressed.
- I keep telling them about that! Somebody's going to get hurt!

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The food here is tasteless! The coffee is never hot, the eggs are cold and the toast is soggy!

- I'm sorry to hear you're not enjoying your meal. I'll contact the Food Service Director and ask her to visit you to address your concerns. Can I get you a fresh piece of toast and cup of coffee right now?
- This is not a gourmet restaurant. You're on that diet for a reason.

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You lost my glasses!

- You're always losing things! I don't have time to deal with this right now. I'll tell the Social Worker that you're still losing stuff.
- I'm so sorry to hear that; you must be upset. I would be too. When was the last time you remember having them? We want to do everything we can to find your glasses. Let's see if we can trace this back and find out what happened.

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It's okay to think it.....just don't say it!

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When I left this morning after breakfast my mother was sitting in the same exact spot that she is now and it has been hours. How can you let her sit there all day?

- I'm sorry. That should not happen. I will ask the Director of Nursing to come and speak to you, she will want to hear about this. Is there something that I can do for you right now?
- She might be there because we're short-staffed. She's not my resident. I'll tell the nurse.

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I'm not ready to go home but they told me Medicare wouldn't pay for any more days. I need more time, they promised me I would get the therapy I needed before going home.

- I'm sorry to hear that, oftentimes people feel like they are not quite ready to go home. Has anyone discussed with you what you will need in terms of home care and ongoing therapy? Let's talk about what would help you feel better about going home.
- We don't control Medicare. If they said you have to go, you have to go. There's nothing we can do.

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**Okay, enough with the dogs.....
"Who's got some examples they'd like to share?"**

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Got ya again!!!!

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Let's Review

- Respond quickly
- Show remorse
- Don't offer excuses
- Follow up
- Be honest
- Leave door open
- Choose correct setting
- Take responsibility
- Listen
- Be contrite
- Be humble
- Have a little faith

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Questions? Comments?

Thank you!!!

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