

I Was Wrong

By Davon Cook

Forgiveness doesn't happen overnight; it's a journey, and the hardest may be getting started. One party being willing to admit its part in the rift can get the journey underway. For some of us, the three hardest words to say are: I was wrong. I find it easier to say these words in purely professional situations where I take ownership of my fault or mistake. But in personal relationships where there is history and emotion (as in, your family business situation!), it's somehow much harder to do. I find myself rationalizing that I acted in a certain way in response to a previous difficult encounter. But that first step of vulnerability—admitting I was at fault, or at least that I was some portion of the problem—is helpful before meaningful forgiveness can occur.

Wrongs come in all shapes and sizes. Some are small, and perhaps humorous in retrospect. I'm thinking of the time I ignored Lance's direction not to fly a certain small, unreliable airline and thereby arrived at my client meeting half a day late! Others are large and life-altering, and they take much more time and healing to reconcile.

And sometimes the "wrong" is unintentional. Sometimes it is being absent when needed, or overlooking someone's struggle or hurt, or not proactively thinking how we could help but just being too busy to notice. In a situation of low trust, an unintentional wrong can be perceived as a quite intentional hurt. Yet when it's brought to our attention and the disappointment or hurt is expressed, the need to recognize our fault is just as important.

It takes confidence in self and our own worth to be able to admit mistakes, yet doing so is a sign of emotional intelligence. If you're someone who struggles to get those three words out, can you acknowledge "I didn't handle that well"? Or can you show remorse by your actions and demeanor in future interactions? That's the first step to meaningful forgiveness. And it's a good lesson to review as we head into the season of Thanksgiving.