

Medical Encounters and Everyday Life: Why Apologies Heal

Aaron Lazare, M.D.

Professor of Psychiatry
Chancellor and Dean Emeritus
University of Massachusetts Medical School
Worcester, MA USA

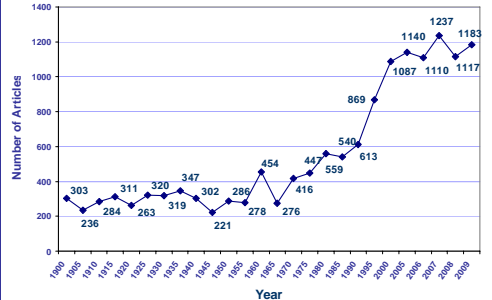


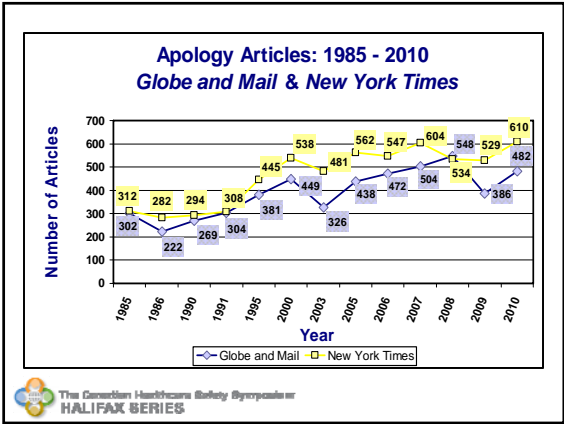
Objectives

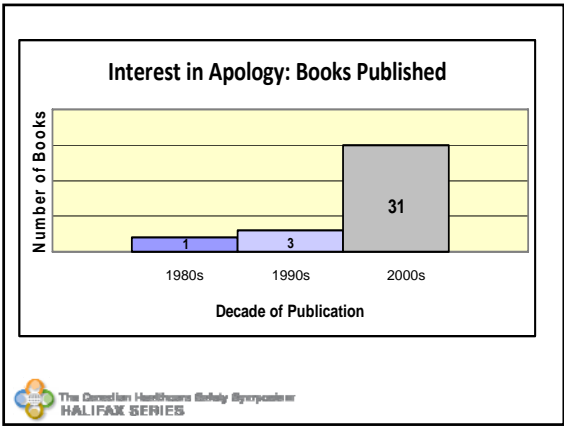
- The history and application of apology
- The growing importance of apology
- Emerging interest in apology
- Defining apology and related concepts
- *A comprehensive approach for making an effective apology*
 - Overall Goals
 - Structural Aspects
 - Specific Functions
- *Apologies beyond medical errors: humiliation*



Apology Articles New York Times 1900-2009







Previous Theories: Why Apologies Have Grown in Importance

- The end of World War II & the Cold War
- Empowered disenfranchised populations
- Influence of Pope John XXIII & Pope John Paul II
- Millennium and Jubilee Year
- World population increased from 2 billion in 1950 to 7 billion in 2008

The Canadian Healthcare Safety Symposium
HALIFAX SERIES

Current Theory on Growth of Apology

The world has become a global village: internet, cell phone, e-mail, satellite and cable television, social networking sites (ex., Facebook and LiveJournal), Twitter, other digital technologies

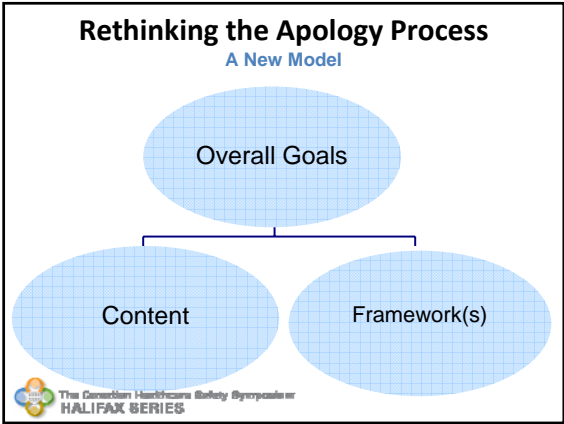
Interest in Apology

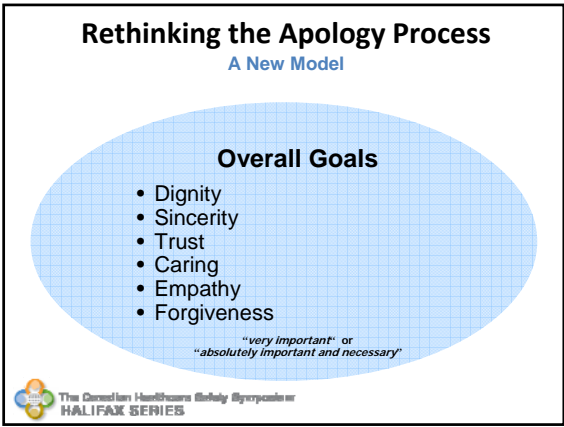
- Colleges, Graduate Schools, and Hospitals
- Psychotherapists, Addiction Specialists
- Retirees, Assisted Living groups
- Hospice care organizations
- Houses of worship
- Industry
- Law enforcement agencies
- Mediation organizations
- Media Interest

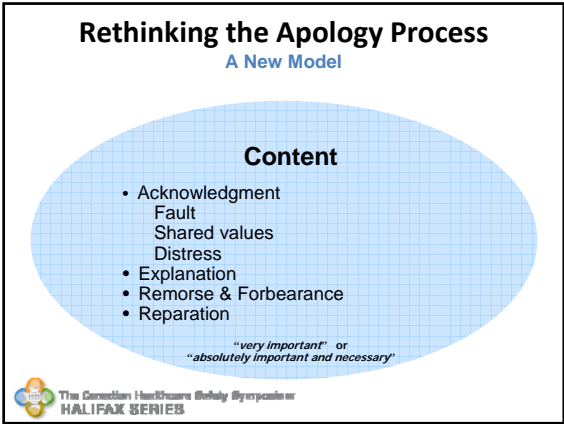
Traditional understanding of the apology process

Content

- Acknowledgment
- Explanation
- Remorse & Forbearance
- Reparation







Rethinking the Apology Process

A New Model

Framework(s)

- Dialogue
- Catharsis
- Principals non-quantifiable
- Timing
- Setting non-quantifiable

*"very important" or
"absolutely important and necessary"*

 The Canadian Healthcare Safety Synopses
HALIFAX SERIES

Definition of Humiliation

- The emotional response of people (individuals, families, groups and nations) to their perception that another person or group has unfairly or unjustly lowered, debased, degraded, dishonored, or brought them down to an inferior position – that they are not receiving the respect and dignity they deserve

 The Canadian Healthcare Safety Synopses
HALIFAX SERIES

Humiliation Syndrome

- Powerlessness
- Often a public event
- Feel blind-sided
- Delayed reaction
- Do a "slow burn"
- Perseverate
- Rage, grudge formation, vengeance
- Impaired judgment, impulsivity
- Never forgotten

 The Canadian Healthcare Safety Synopses
HALIFAX SERIES

Language of Humiliation

- Synonyms and metaphors for humiliation vary in severity and can be placed on a continuum which can be ranked from mild to severe
- People describe themselves as *slighted*, “*dissed*”, *offended*, *hurt*, “*burned*”, *insulted*, *devalued*, *attacked*, *devastated*, *brutalized*



Conclusions

- An apology is an act of **honesty**
- An apology is an act of **generosity**
- An apology is an act of **humility**
- An apology is an act of **commitment**
- An apology is an act of **courage**