

# THE CONDITIONS OF LOVE

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Global Language Monitor Paul JJ Payack believes that there are conservatively 998,968 words in the English language at this point in time. From these thousands of words come millions of phrases that reflect nearly every human emotion imaginable. However, I believe that only a handful of these have the power to truly construe what lies in the human heart. Furthermore, it seems that the strongest emotions are delivered in the simplest of words, but bring with them the power to move mountains. Beyond every other phrase, every other collaboration of words, beyond all the possible combinations in every elite dialect across the globe, it is my belief that two little syllables—only seven tiny letters—have the greatest potency in their deliverance and meaning. With these two words, a variety of other emotions are felt and transferred from one person to another with dramatic and usually very pleasing results. It may even be that without this, the human race as a whole would be lost. In the seventeen years I have breathed on this place we call Earth, I have not lived out every experience. But the single greatest law of life I have found thus far is the power of forgiveness. With a little “I’m sorry” riding on your breath, you have the capability to change entire relationships, be it with your parents, your boyfriend, the boss, or an entire country. The world would be that much better if we all could simply learn to say, “I’m sorry” to one another.

It is common knowledge that people make mistakes. Nobody’s perfect, and no one should ever expect to find someone who is. The people you hold close to you may possibly have the most power to hurt you, and chances are they will from time to time. The truth is, everyone is going to hurt you. You just have to decide who’s worth the pain. You have to determine who is worth suffering for and ultimately who deserves your forgiveness when they falter in front of you. Chances are, you aren’t going to get along with someone very well if you cannot forgive one another. We can only hope that once these loved ones realize their error, they will do all they can to correct what they lacked. This shows that not only does this person regret their action, but that they care about your well-being. Many who ask forgiveness are horrified that they damaged something so precious to them. In many cases, it is because they love the person of whom they hurt, but every so often you may receive a sincere apology from someone who may not hold you in as high regard as those that love you. They may even hate you, but still feel the need to apologize. If not out of love, apologies should be made solely because you damaged another human being—a human being who deserves just as much respect as you do, no matter who they are.

Growing up, we are all exposed to the ridiculously corny videos and health documentaries about peer pressure, where the lines are bombastically blunt and the situations entirely unreal. Peer pressure and bullying in such obvious forms doesn’t exist but in Hollywood. However, one day, sitting on the bus, I found myself in that very blunt and very painful situation. The girl sitting behind me was the victim. That girl who talked to no one and minded her own business. That girl, slightly overweight, who sat alone everyday, who went directly to class, who never made eye contact for fear of what she would see. That girl. Today she couldn’t escape

what human nature had deemed to be her lifelong struggle. For on this day in January, two boys sitting behind her, clearly suffering from severe boredom and an obvious lack of human respect, decided to torture that girl. They asked her why she was so fat. They questioned her eating habits. They attacked her clothing choices, choices I now believe were not due to personal style but to monetary issues at home. They went as far to call her ugly, and not only that, but to point out every reason why she was. These boys used each line in the harshest form possible, and relentlessly attacked her without cease. That girl, that poor girl, being thoroughly interrogated by boys older than she with no apparent reason for their vile behavior . . . what was she to do? As I watched the event unfold before me, I realized how cliché it all was. Never had I seen such blunt force used with words, not even in the corniest of movies. And never had I witnessed such damage. I could not understand how a human being could torture another life in such a barbaric way. I got off the bus that day in full question of the good nature of our human race as a whole.

I went home that night and I cried. I cried for that girl who had to go through what she did. It wasn't her fault God had made her the way she was. It wasn't her fault she came from a single-parent home. In fact, none of it was her fault, and yet those boys had decided to punish her for it anyway. I remember her face—how sallow, how cold, how empty—staring out the window and pretending not to listen . . . but words penetrate more than just the eardrum. They burrow themselves deep into the heart in a parasitic way and there they grow and feed off of self-doubt. I told my mother about the incident that night. I told her I felt the pain of that girl as if the boys were saying those words to me, even though they weren't. I told her that I didn't understand why they had treated that girl with such little respect. My mother explained to me that some people don't realize the damage they cause, and for others, they simply don't care. But noticing what a toll the incident had taken upon her young and innocent daughter, she resolved that I do something about it instead of just worry. The next day, I went to the school counselor and told him what I witnessed and what had been said. With concern on his face, he assured me that the situation would be handled, but that wasn't enough for me. All day, I waited for the bell to ring that would send us students to the busses, and finally it did. I knew what was going to happen. Those boys had found a target easy to hit, and they came back for more. This time, I popped my head over the seat and glared at them. If they were going to be blunt, I decided that I should be, too. I asked them exactly why they were saying these things. They knew she couldn't help it. Then, I questioned their motives. Was it because they felt the need to bring her down to remind them of all the good things they had that she was bereft of? They laughed at me for siding with the underdog, but for some reason were at a loss for words, and failed to supply me with the answers to my questions. I didn't care if they laughed. It stopped their hideous game, and that was all I needed. I invited that girl to sit with me, which she did for the weeks following. I was her shield now. I wasn't going to let those boys get away with their name-calling again.

The next day, the counselor came into our class, and called the boys out. I knew they would all know who had told the counselor, but sometimes doing the right thing overshadows the grief you might obtain from it. The counselor asked them to stop pestering the girl and to keep to themselves, which they promised to do. But what happened next no one expected. That day, on the bus ride home, each and every boy apologized for his treatment of that girl, completely unsolicited. The counselor had not told them to do it. No one, in fact, had even hinted toward an apology, and yet there they were, humbling themselves before the person that only yesterday had not been worthy of their respect or empathy. Without doubt, it was not the first time the girl had

been slandered, but it very likely was the first time an apology was offered. Even if those boys didn't see her as the precious being that she was, in the end they at least found it in themselves to treat her with the respect she deserved simply because she was a human with feelings. The impact on that girl was phenomenal. The glowing aura she began to give out was one of happiness and relief, no longer that of internal pain and suffering. All it took was an apology for a past wrong doing—a simple “I’m sorry” — and that girl was on a whole new path. She had self-esteem I doubt she ever felt before. It appeared that her entire outlook on life changed, and all because someone had finally shown her some decency. That girl no longer hung her head to every class, no longer closed up in every conversation. Two simple words; that was all it took. Two small, sincere words, and a young girl's view of herself was drastically altered. For the first time in a long time, someone actually cared about how she felt, and that was truly bliss.

To ask forgiveness shows a sincere need to come to terms with your past actions. Uttering that simple “I’m sorry” is one of the most humbling things you can do as a person. It may hurt to realize exactly what you did, but I imagine it would hurt more to keep it in and never ask forgiveness for the pain you caused. In my experience, to forgive one who has wronged against you is to love and to love again . . . and again . . . and again. Forgiveness is the only way to show and to prove your unconditional love for someone. After all, if you can learn to forgive, what can't you get through? Whether it be because they are the love of your life or simply because they are human like you, to forgive is to love. For when you say, “I’m sorry,” the “I love you” is implied.