The “C O N F E S S” acronym for seeking Forgiveness

One model for seeking forgiveness called CONFESSing and proposed by Worthington has 7 elements for how to communicate when one is wrong (2003).

We are told that making a good confession of one’s wrongdoing requires the following elements:

* C: Confession without an excuse: we must say that we did wrong and name the wrongdoing specifically.
* O: Offer of a genuine apology. An apology involves taking responsibility and expressing remorse and contrition. Most importantly, we must get across the idea that we are truly remorseful and contrite, [ashamed, guilty](https://positivepsychology.com/shame-guilt/), and disappointed, even if we do not say explicitly the words “I’m sorry.” The key is to communicate the sadness and sorrow for having done the hurtful or offensive act.
* N: Note the pain of the other person. We need to express empathy for the person we’re asking forgiveness from and show that we understand their experience. It also helps to describe what we perceive them experiencing and suffering in a way that suggests that we understand their perspective and emotional experience and can even identify with them had we been in the same situation.
* F: Forever value the relationship. It is important to express how resolving the relationship problems is more valuable to us than winning or being right and are willing to offer to sacrifice whatever is necessary to resolve the difficulty.
* E: Equalize through restitution. However uncomfortable, we need to ask if there is anything that can be done to make up for the wrongdoing but must resist making suggestions of restitution as people understand love in different ways and value different things as an expression of it. Then be willing to do the restitution or negotiate something comparable.
* S: Say we will never do it again. We need to also express how we will never try to hurt him or her in the same way ever again.
* S: Seek forgiveness by explicitly asking for it as in: “Can you ever forgive me for hurting you?”

For a more in-depth discussion on effective confession see Worthington’s 2003 [*Forgiving and Reconciling*](https://www.amazon.com/Forgiving-Reconciling-Bridges-Wholeness-Hope/dp/0830832440/): Bridges to Wholeness and Hope published by InterVarsity Press of Downers Grove, IL.