



Commentary Transcript: *You Again* Film Scene

This scene takes place after the climax of this movie. Marni, played by Kristen Bell, has just gotten back at her high school bully, Joanna. Marni outed Joanna as a bully at Joanna's wedding dinner, effectively breaking off her engagement to Marni's brother.

Let's watch the scene.

[PLAY SCENE]

This commentary is about apologies. This scene shows a decent apology—and it happens in a great location, in front of the fridge.

Let's break down this scene and consider the act of apologizing in real life.

PAUSE: "I do want you to know that I am truly sorry."

This is a solid start. Joanna is looking Marni in the eye and using a sincere tone of voice. But this character was so mean to Marni—purposely hurting her for years. Joanna is going to need to say more.

PAUSE: "Would you mind saying that one more time, just, like, slower or something?"

This is a great example of how apologies can be hard to absorb. When someone has hurt you on purpose (and enjoyed it), and the pain has affected you for a long time, "I'm sorry" is never enough. It's almost like the first apology only opens the door to the real one that should be coming next. Marni needs Joanna to own up to the things she did and acknowledge her effect on Marni.

PAUSE: "I really, I... I really apologize."

Again, good stuff here. Joanna is getting more specific and acknowledging what she did. She's looking Marni in the eye and sounding sincere. In your own life, you may have noticed that apologies that acknowledge actions and their consequences are more effective—and feel more "real"—than someone just saying, "I'm sorry" or summarizing like, "I'm sorry I was mean to you." Sincere apologies include recognition of the pain we've caused, and that recognition can give us permission to release resentment and shame—so everyone involved can start to let it go. In this case, it works.

OK, that was a decent apology. You can tell that it worked because things started to soften between them.

If this were real life, a more authentic connection may have sounded something like this. I'll start with Joanna.



Joanna: Marni, I am so sorry for how I behaved toward you in school. I was cruel to you, and you did nothing to deserve it.

Marni: I must have done something for you to torture me like you did.

Joanna: I was horrible to you, Marni, but it wasn't about you. I hurt a lot of people when I was younger because I was insecure and I wanted to feel powerful. And I did feel powerful when I was hurting you. But now, when I think about how I behaved, I feel so ashamed of the person I was, and I recognize that the things I did really affected you. I don't expect you to forget how I was before, but I am sorry. I do hope that, one day, you can forgive me.

Marni: Can you say that again? I've been waiting for this a long time, and it's kind of hard to process.

Joanna: I totally understand. Marni, I apologize. Truly. For singling you out, for encouraging people to laugh at you, for pushing you onto that basketball court and humiliating you. And for so many other things I did. I added so much pain to your life and never stopped to care about how much I was hurting you. I hate how I treated you, and when we met again, I acted like I didn't even remember you... which was immature and unfair. I would understand if you still hate me—and never forgive me—but I apologize.

Marni: I did hate you, Joanna. And I was horrified when I learned that you were my brother's fiancée. But thank you for that apology. I'll try to forgive you. But I see that I owe you an apology, too. I wanted to get back at you by embarrassing you at the dinner and, for a minute, I enjoyed humiliating you. I hated how you treated me. But I also hate that I let it make me get nasty, too. I apologize for hurting you tonight and for kind of enjoying it.

Joanna: I understand why you did it, Marni, and I forgive you. Can we start fresh, call it even?

Marni: That'd be better than acting like nothing happened or carrying it around forever. So, yeah.

That's a more detailed revision than the movie scene, and depending on the situation, an apology might be much more concise. The point is to acknowledge what you did and why you did it, own that it was about you—not them—and show that you see the effects of your actions.

A few more thoughts about this exploration...

Good apologies are an art form. They're part acknowledgment, part accountability, and part sincerity—while keeping the focus on specific behaviors and feelings. And, all the while, it's important to notice if the wronged party is hearing what they need to, to consider it a real apology.



Here are some tips along those lines...

First, acknowledge the specific things you did and the feelings you caused. Here, it's, "I pushed you on the basketball court to humiliate you."

Second, reflect that you know why you made those choices—and own up to the fact that it was something in *you*. The other person did not make you behave the way you did. You chose that behavior. Often, the behaviors we need to apologize for come from meeting our needs (gross as they may be) at the expense of another person. Here, that's, "I was insecure and seeking feelings of power. And, I got that power by hurting you."

Third, actually apologize. The word "sorry" is often used as an informal apology, but sometimes our behavior needs to be formally acknowledged. The phrases "I'm so sorry," "I'm truly sorry," and "I apologize" might seem interchangeable, but when we have purposely hurt someone, "I apologize" can come across as a more sincere recognition of the pain we've caused. In this clip, Joanna uses both approaches with great effect, but they do sound a little different.

Finally, ask for forgiveness while recognizing that the other person has a right to *not* forgive you. Here, that's something like, "I may not deserve it, but I hope that you can forgive me."

If you're *reading* the person you're apologizing to, you'll know if your apology is hitting the mark because they'll start to soften, and it'll feel like something is shifting—you've connected and are starting to move the barrier that was between you. If you don't notice that softening, you're either not being specific enough, sincere enough, or accurately describing the effects of the things you did—so keep going. You'll know when you're getting it right. Which also means that you need to be aware of your own ability to apologize sincerely. That's about accountability and timing.

If you believe that the other person *caused* you to behave the way you did, don't bother apologizing. Maybe both parties affected the situation and the outcome, but don't bring in statements like, "Yeah, but you did..." as a defense. It's time for *one* person's feelings and experience to be acknowledged. If they need to apologize to you, too, ask them to do so—after you've done your part.

Make your apology at a time when the person seems likely to be receptive—not when they're washing dishes or running out the door—and when you can embody the version of yourself that *can be* sincere—without defending your behavior, putting the blame on them, or minimizing the pain you've caused. Timing, energy, and tone go a long way here and if the listener isn't in the mood or you show resistance to owning up to your actions, it'll blow the whole thing up.

There are plenty of ways to wipe a slate clean and move on. And there is no "right" way to do anything when it comes to communication. But it helps if we adapt our apologies to the needs



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of the moment and the complex history that might exist. We all do stuff we need to apologize for, and when we get good at apologizing we can move beyond conflict and difficulty without making a huge deal of it.

Whether it's a quick, "Whoops, I apologize; I was being so thoughtless" or a more detailed apology to someone you bullied, when you come at it with genuine remorse and a desire to ease some of the pain you caused, you have a better chance of freeing yourself and others from that pain. That way, no one needs to carry it around anymore.

We're all learning as we go, and there is no perfect way to think, feel, be, or communicate. The lesson here is that we can do a lot of good—for ourselves and others—with a sincere apology.

OK, that's it for this exploration of apologies. I hope you found some tidbits that you can apply in your own life.