

Chapter Eight - When you are wrong, apologize for what you did, not how you made the other person feel.

FILE: Laws of Life, Book One: Ditch the System. Design Your Life.

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Accountability

The Baseline: Owning mistakes without relying on the surrounding mitigating circumstances.

Sincere Apology

The Execution: Dropping the ego, stating the fault directly, and taking action to make it right.

Trust Repair

The Outcome: Rebuilding broken bonds through honesty, not defensive posturing.

Personal Responsibility

The Boundary: The absolute distinction between taking responsibility for your actions and attempting to manage someone else's feelings.

**WHEN YOU ARE WRONG, APOLOGIZE FOR
WHAT YOU DID,
NOT HOW YOU MADE THE OTHER PERSON FEEL.**



WHAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN

- Dismissing the other party's feelings.

- Ignoring the actual harm caused.

- Evading the need for real atonement.



WHAT THIS ACTUALLY MEANS

- You still bear full responsibility for emotional, financial, or physical injury.

- Empathy remains, but ego and defense are removed from the apology.

I am sorry if anyone was hurt

Conditionality denies certainty of harm.

I am sorry that you felt

Shifts focus from the speaker's action to the victim's reaction.

I am sorry, but

Introduces blame-shifting and negotiation.

Mistakes were made

Passive voice removes the responsible actor.

$$\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Sincere} \\ \text{Apology} \end{array} \right] + \left[\text{BUT} \right] = \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Blame} \\ \text{Negotiation} \end{array} \right]$$

The person you are apologizing to just heard you say, "I am shifting some of the blame to you." The addition of "but" acts as a complete erasure of contrition.

YOUR ZONE

- Your screw up.
- Your responsibility.
- Your apology.

THEIR ZONE

- Their reaction.
- Their overreaction.
- Their responsibility.

You worry about your screw up, you own that... and you leave it to the other party to do the same, in their own time. Never cross the boundary.

CLINICAL CHART

DEFENSIVENESS
(EMOTIONAL SHIELDING)

01: THE INPUT

Direct apology issued
without caveats or
defense.

02: THE DROP

Listener expects blame-shifting
bullshit. When it never arrives,
tension rapidly falls.

03: THE RECIPROCATION

Reasonable people, no longer
under attack, are granted room
to recognize their own role.

TIME

TELEMETRY



SUBJECT : Grandson Correction.
INCIDENT : Broken rule, known consequences enforced.
REACTION : Hurt feelings resulting from the correction.
PROTOCOL EXECUTED : Discuss feelings, channel them to understanding.
Do not apologize for enforcing established rules.

TERMINAL TAKEAWAY : Hurt feelings do not automatically equal wrongdoing. If you are not wrong, you do not apologize.

DUAL CASE FILES MATRIX

CASE A: THE PODCAST OUTRAGE

SCENARIO: Listener offended by a perfectly good word used to describe a third-party situation.

PROTOCOL:

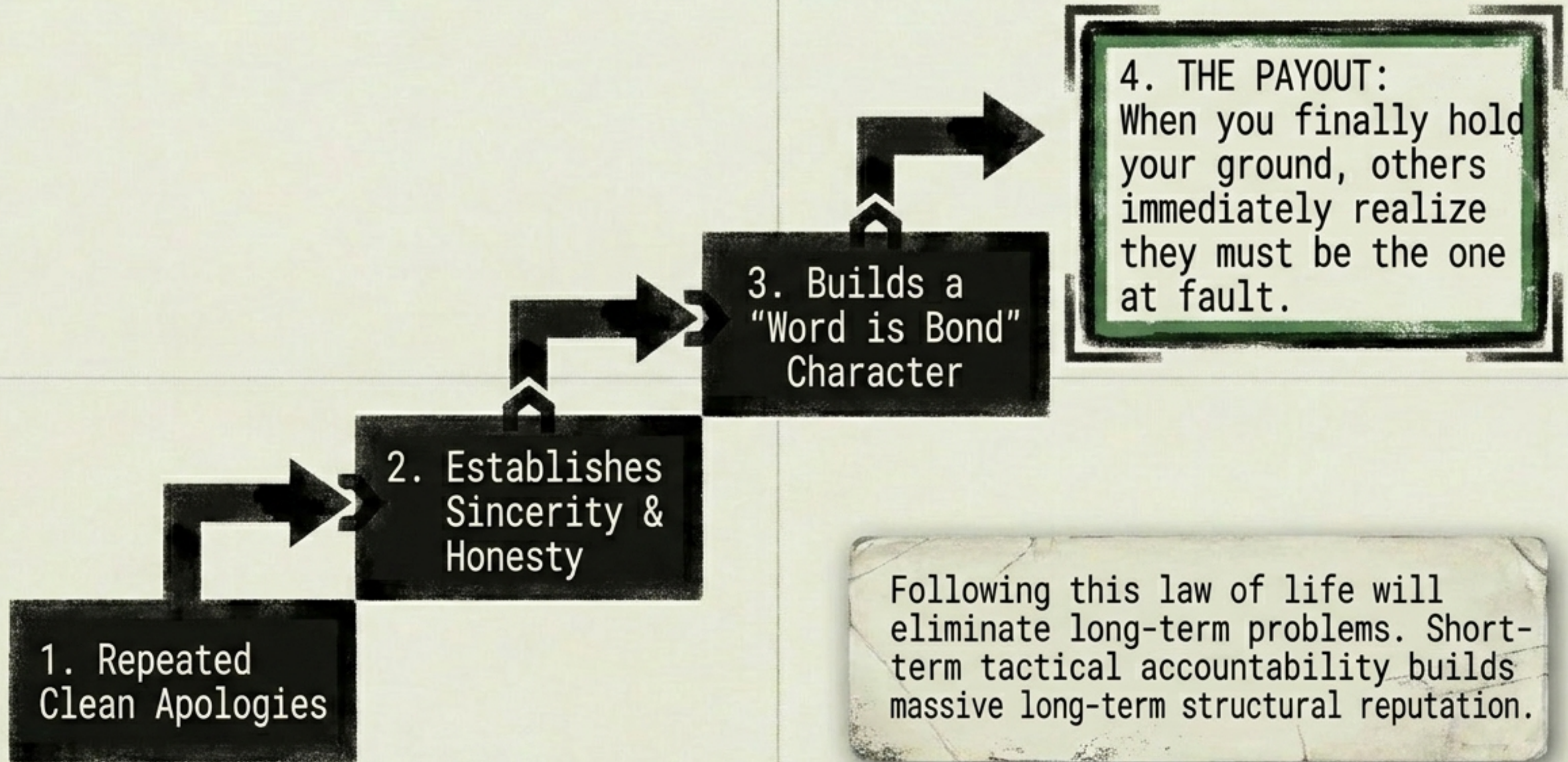
Do not apologize for words not directed at them. Unrelated outrage does not command an apology.

CASE B: THE EMPLOYEE REVIEW

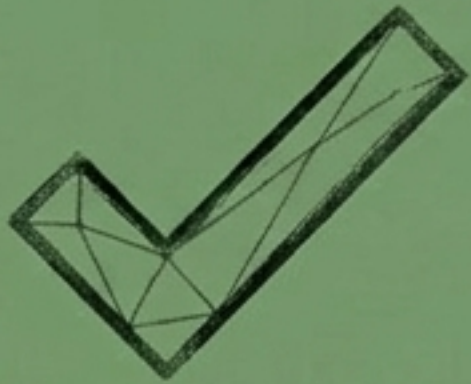
SCENARIO: Employee receives poor performance feedback and reacts with tears/emotion.

PROTOCOL:

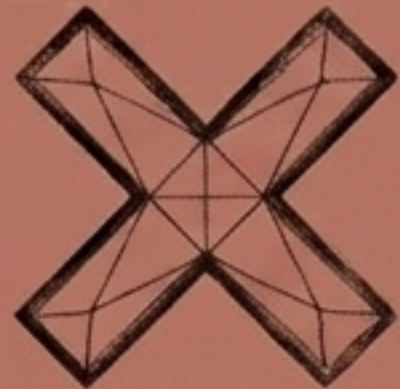
Wait for emotion to pass.
Offer help. Demand improvement.
Do not apologize for the necessary correction.



SCENARIO: Accidentally stepping on the dog's foot.



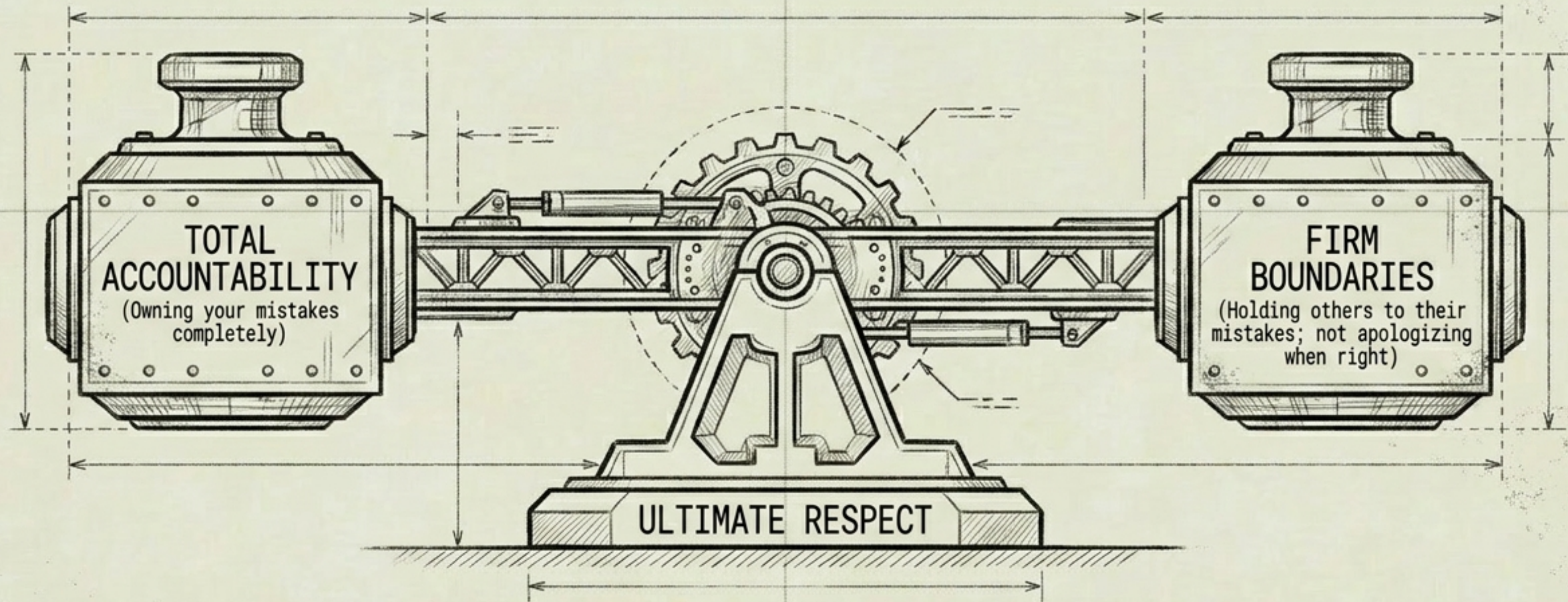
ACTION REQUIRED: Provide tone, comfort, and immediate empathy. The reaction is to the sincerity and energy of the apology.



ACTION FORBIDDEN: Lecturing the dog about being underfoot. Defending your own clumsiness. Acting like a defense attorney in a court of law.

Humans, like canines, react to the energy of the apology. They need immediate comfort and ownership, not a logical defense of your actions.

PRINCIPLE: Every interaction teaches people how to deal with you.



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Own Exactly What You Did

State clearly what you did wrong in plain language.
No vague wording, no passive voice, unmistakably yours.

Without Excuse or Deflection

No 'but', no context stacking, no shifting blame. Your apology is about your actions, not the circumstances.

Now Make It Right

Commit to fixing it, prevent recurrence, back words with action so the apology is proven over time.

OWNERSHIP:

Apology is about actions, not feelings. Own it fully, clearly, directly.

EXCUSES:

Ego prevents clean apologies. Excuses destroy trust faster than the mistake.

TRUST:

No 'buts' (negotiating blame). Direct apologies prompt reasonable people to own their part.

BOUNDARIES:

You own your actions; they own theirs. Do not apologize just to ease tension if you aren't wrong.

REPUTATION:

Every interaction teaches people how to deal with you.

What apology have I recently weakened with a “but”?

Where am I excusing my actions instead of owning them?

Where am I apologizing only to manage someone else's emotion?

What past error can I make right today through action?

Computer – My actions are mine. The other person's actions are theirs. Own my part completely.

Computer – My reputation is built on what I take responsibility for, not what I excuse.

Computer – Being wrong is not weakness. Hiding from it is.