When an apology is necessary, we suggest the *Four-Part Apology*. This technique allows the person to look beyond the actual incident to consequences of behavior. By defining those consequences and choosing a different behavior, both individuals remain thoughtful and supportive rather than angry or defensive. If you and your child practice this tool with each other, apologies will be easier and more meaningful.

1. **Acknowledge**  
   Take responsibility for your actions and behaviors. Use “I” statements.
   
   Example: “I acknowledge that I changed our plans about babysitting without checking in with you, and I only told you at the last minute.”

2. **Apologize**  
   Acknowledge the cost to others. If unaware of cost, ask.
   
   Example: “I apologize for not respecting you and for not checking in with you before changing my plans. I know it was hard for you to give up the plans you made with your friends because I needed you to babysit.”

3. **Make It Right**  
   Deal with the consequences of behavior. Ask the person, “Is there anything I can do to make it right?”
   
   Example: “I want to do something to help maintain our relationship. What can I do to make it right?”

4. **Recommit**  
   Make a commitment to appropriate behavior. Commit to not having the same behavior again.
   
   Example: “I agree to always respect you and to always check in with you before making any plans that involve you.”