

Ask for a do-over | Christin Smith Myers

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Within moments of walking into the house, I criticized my daughter, picked on my son, and asked my husband why dinner wasn't ready. Ugh. I was happy to be home after a frustrating day at work and a long drive home, but I sure wasn't acting like it. In the span of mere minutes, I had poisoned the mood at the Myers house. Not wanting to be responsible for a downward spiral, I said to them, "I'm sorry. Can I please have a do-over?" Fortunately for me, they agreed.

I walked out the door, stood on the porch for a moment, and walked in again with a smile and ready to give the hugs my family deserved.

The do-over (or mulligan, as it's called in golf) is a second chance to perform an action without penalty. This can be a powerful strategy when a conversation gets off to a bad start or when you behave poorly. I think of it as coming to an emotional agreement that the previous statement or action will be stricken from the record.

Here are a few do-over tips:

- This strategy has to be used sparingly, and with people with whom you consistently communicate fairly well. If you're asking for do-overs repeatedly, you need to work a little harder at getting your communication right the first time, or you will seriously jeopardize your relationship.
- If you are someone who asks for do-overs, you must be willing to grant do-overs to others as well. Trying to teach my children about compassion and forgiveness, I've offered them do-overs when they've said or done something that wasn't very kind.
- A key to a successful do-over is to acknowledge your error, taking responsibility for the situation you created. It's not a "get out of jail free" card, but rather an opportunity to rescue a conversation going in the wrong direction by calling a time out, apologizing, and restarting.

Although I'm most likely to ask for a do-over with my husband or children, this has also been effective in the workplace. I work hard to ensure I have a strong rapport with each of my team members, and I occasionally tap into this by acknowledging when I've jumped to a conclusion or spoken too soon about something. Asking for a do-over is an effective way to get the conversation back on track.