



“I was wrong. I’m sorry. I don’t
know. I need help.”

Louise Penny
Author
(b. 1958)

Literature often provides guidance and wisdom--in fiction and real life. A current favorite author is Louise Penny. She lives in Montreal, Canada and her novels feature the work and career of Chief Inspector Gamache of the Sûreté du Québec. As he mentors young agents in his division, Chief Inspector Gamache schools them in four sayings that can lead to wisdom--which his mentor taught him.

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Seems to me that there are kernels of wisdom here for all of us who, like the Chief Inspector, want to practice humankindness, engage teams, inspire colleagues, and mentor the next generation of those who will advance the ministry.

I was wrong. The honest leader admits to shortcomings and mistakes--owns them, processes them, learns from them and then lets them go and moves forward.

I am sorry. Used earnestly, *I am sorry* are three of the most powerful words in the English language. They can lift the mantle of guilt and reestablish relationships. They must be said directly--most effectively eye to eye. They can bridge a divide, defuse an emotionally fraught moment, and often open a way forward.

I don’t know. A leader who reaches out to others for shared wisdom establishes trust with colleagues, honors their gifts and contributions and improves employee morale.

I need help. Helping others is core to our mission and to our purpose as human beings. Asking for help builds community, relationships, and good health. The task becomes more manageable and the odds of achieving the goal increase.