

It Was My Fault

Suppose you injure someone, perhaps by making an erroneous decision about them. It could be that it caused the loss of a job, or resulted in serious damage to their reputation and income. Furthermore, the injured person is livid over his or her loss. This is a situation where it is tempting to run away and ignore the error you made. Maybe you can blame the victim to somehow justify your mistake and ignore your responsibility. Emotions aside, the collegial requirement (and general ethical requirement) is to make amends for your error as best you can. Hopefully the damage was not irreversible, but it could be. The reparation required has to match the damage done by you. What exactly could you do?

There might be many good ways to deal with this. Maybe you could begin by explaining what happened and why the error occurred. Was there a misunderstanding? Were you overcome with emotion and anger but now realize that that was inappropriate? Maybe you just weren't thinking. Maybe it wasn't totally your fault and some of the damage was due to an accident or an unfortunate co-occurrence. Whatever you do, making amends for your part seems required. Can you fix it, or do you have to find another way to repay the error? Do you need to consult with a professional to feel OK about it?

Injuring someone can create many problems for you. You may feel guilty, lose confidence, and want to get away from the situation. A doctor who seriously injures a patient comes to mind. Unless dealt with in some way, it could have a negative impact on the doctor, his or her entire staff, and their future. Sometimes these are very difficult and troubling situations. Can you think of some general rules on how to deal with your injuries to others? Has there been a time when you were injured and it was appropriately dealt with. Or perhaps not?