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10th Grade

Age 16

Because I have met Mrs. Eva Kor, who will forever have a lasting impact on my life, this contest sparks much interest for me. Hearing her life lessons from so long ago during one of our world's darkest times has stuck with me; and, now eight years removed from that meeting, I still try to use them today.

Forgiving and Freeing

Among the many lessons I heard the day I got to meet Mrs. Kor, the one that has stuck with me the most is this: "Forgive Your Worst Enemy." From a young age I knew I didn't have the average white-picket-fence family. My mother would come and go, my biological father was never in the picture, even from day one, and my siblings grew up knowing nothing about me. I deeply resented my mother for giving me this lifestyle of constantly moving and inevitably forcing me to move in with my grandparents.

In the summer of 2015, I was able to hear a lecture from Mrs. Kor. At only eight years of age then, I didn't think much about it; I couldn't frame my experience with hers and that lesson. Although the older I got, the more I thought and still do think back to listening to her explanation as to why forgiving her worst enemy had helped and changed her.

Mrs. Kor had explained to those attending this lecture that her hatred for the Nazis was something she had held on to for many years after the Holocaust. She explained that sometimes it would just be this overwhelming feeling that would come over her body and she couldn't stand it anymore. She then mentioned how she had decided to *forgive* Dr. Josef Mengele, a German

doctor, known as the “Angel of Death,” who conducted deadly medical experiments. I remember hearing her mention how this was more helpful to her, the victim, than for him, the perpetrator. Hearing this made me think specifically about how *I* should forgive my mother for all of the years we simply endured together surrounded by so many walls of circumstance and ill-fated choices.

My mother and I have had many fights over the years, which often resulted in not talking for days, weeks, and even months. Hearing Mrs. Kor’s lecture at such a young age, it took a minute to connect; still, I didn’t think I would be able to forgive like she had done. Now, eight seemingly long years later, I *do* understand.

In the summer of this year (2023), I was watching a video on *Youtube* with my mother. It talked about Mrs. Kor; it talked about how she had forgiven many people and how it set her free and has given her peace beyond that awful time. I sat for a few days after watching the video and decided to forgive my mother. I wanted to be set free and have that same peace in my own life.

After a few days of brainstorming and writing down notes, ideas, the notions of my heart and mind, I decided it was time to talk to my mother. I sat her down and said, “Mom, we need to talk.” That was one of the scariest moments in my life until it was over; but after all was said, I no longer felt the burden of it, always a heavy weight strapped to my back.

Mrs. Kor had said, “Anger is a seed for war. Forgiveness is a seed for peace.” This is a quote that I now understand more than ever. Since forgiving my mother for everything over the years, we now are rebuilding our relationship as mother and daughter; and I no longer feel that weight, no longer feel as though I am “walking on eggshells” and fighting the urges to explode anytime I am in her presence. Grace is good.