

## To Forgive and Forge

My name is Sydney Eckert, and I am a junior at Castle High School. I am sixteen years old. I heard about this contest through my teacher, and I have always enjoyed writing. When I saw the topics, I felt an instant connection with the one about forgiveness, because forgiving is a personal value of mine I try to emulate.

Forgive and forget is not always good advice. To forget what harm has been done, to erase the actions of the offender, should not be done. To forgive and to forge would be a better phrase. Forgive the offender, and to forge a path towards peace, and for the offender to do the same, is what should be done instead.

Eva Kor said that forgiveness was a release, a way to move forward and free yourself from the pain. She was a survivor of the Holocaust, and her and her sister were forced to go through horrible experiments during World War II because they were twins. This trauma can't be forgotten. Kor talked about forgiveness as a way of moving forwards, and created a document of forgiveness in which she talked with a man who was previously a doctor at Auschwitz. She believed in forgiving your perpetrators - not saying what they did was okay, but forgiving them and letting that pain be released from you.

I have had a few experiences where I've had to forgive others who have hurt me on a small or large scale, or have had to forgive myself for my mistakes. These experiences have helped me learn more about the concept of forgiveness, and I found out a lot that I had previously not paid attention to.

Forgiving could be considered one of the hardest actions for a person to do in their life. Sometimes, the pain is so great that we cannot bring ourselves to stop feeling negative emotions for the one who caused us hurt. Sometimes, we feel that the person didn't get punished, didn't get justice, and got away clean. We feel the injustice of those who wronged us, and we want the offender to get what they deserve. We, as humans, do not want to forgive, do not want to forget, and do not want to forge, we want revenge, we want equality.

I can relate to this when it comes to a situation I experienced my freshman year. I was betrayed in a way by somebody I knew. I told her something that she in turn used against me. I was incredibly hurt by what she had done. I wasn't even thinking about revenge because I was just upset. But, I didn't want to harp on the situation and keep feeling down about it, and I knew I would feel better to forgive and not continue to dwell on it. It took me some time, but I was able to overcome the hurt and move forward through forgiveness.

To forgive is to overcome that primal want. It is to go against the anger, the fear, the hatred and to open a door that, for many people, is locked forever. And the key to opening that door is many different things, for many different people. It takes courage to forgive. It takes a lot of strength to forgive, because forgiving goes against what logic tells us to do. Logic tells us that this person has harmed us, we must harm them back. But, that is not right. I was reading about

what Eva Kor said about forgiveness, and was very moved by what she'd mentioned. She said, "Forgiveness is like a prescription or medicine for physical health and well-being. If we stay angry, this anger poisons our lives and our health." I really like that quote, because it is very true. We have to forgive to become better people ourselves.

Forgiveness can be seen as a weakness to some. Of dropping a motive for revenge, of giving up on justice. It is in fact the opposite. Forgiveness is the greatest strength in the arsenal of human actions. It makes your mind stronger, your heart braver. Revenge does not need to be motivation. It only causes more hurt and anger towards the end, and how does one feel after getting that revenge they want? Nothing but emptiness. It does not bring back the loss, or relieve the pain. It only makes you as bad as the one who hurt you. Forgiveness also has nothing to do with justice itself. They are different entities. Eva Kor also mentions how justice and forgiveness are separate. Forgiveness is to help the victim, not clear the name of the offender. We are not saying what the offender did is okay. We are bringing peace. Like Kor said, "Forgiveness brings serenity, healing, respect, peace, and love."

Forgiveness is the resolution of the heart. It is not giving up, it is not saying the actions of the offender are okay, it is not even saying everything will be okay in the end. It is knowing that the actions of the offender are wrong, hoping they will do better, and not judging off of those wrong actions. It is an expression of starting over, of hope, and of humbleness. It takes a strong heart to forgive, and those who can do it have the strongest hearts of all. Kor mentions that forgiveness helps people become better and come out of hard situations. She said that forgiveness brings peace, and I agree completely.

Sometimes the enemy is not an outside force. Sometimes it is oneself. Sometimes the actions one does hurts themselves, and they become the offender and the victim. Forgiving oneself is the hardest form of forgiveness, because you see the motives of the offender. You understand it. Yet as the victim you feel the unfairness, the hurt, the shame. It is one of the most complex relationships, to be the one in the wrong and the one wronged.

I have made mistakes during my life, and have felt much guilt after making them. It is hard for me to forgive myself sometimes because I was the one doing the wrong and saw the reason behind it. But in the end, I forgive myself when I make a mistake because I know I need to move on. Harping on the mistakes you've made that have negatively impacted others and yourself will not gain you anything. You must learn from them, and then forge that new path by forgiving yourself and moving forward to not make those mistakes again.

Forgiving is not an easy act, but the action releases you. It does not destroy the chains completely, but frees you from the prison. We may think we cannot do it, but in the end, we can. We can and we must, in order to release the pain held in for so long. So remember to forgive, but not forget. Forgive and forge, forge a path to becoming a better person and making forgiveness a replacement for revenge. As Eva Kor said, forgiveness is a seed for peace. "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13).