FORGIVING

TWO SIDES TO EVERY COIN

ED U. GATOR AND THE GOLD WATCH

TAKING A CHANCE TO HELP A PERSON
Have you ever thought to yourself, “I’ve really done it this time! How am I ever going to get out of this mess?” Well, you’re not alone! All of us have made some big mistakes in our lives. Without meaning to we’ve probably all lost important things, or broken valuable objects, or hurt someone else’s feelings. Sometimes it’s incredibly tough to get up the nerve to tell somebody when you’ve done something wrong. Just admitting you’re wrong in the first place can be hard. Saying you’re sorry for your actions takes maturity, and a great sense of personal responsibility. But, it’s the first and most important step in fixing your mistake!

But, like many things in the world, there are two sides to this coin. After you’ve said you’re sorry, the best thing that could happen is the other person could say “That’s okay, I forgive you.” Whew, what a relief! But forgiving somebody can be as hard as saying you’re sorry, or admitting you’re wrong. Because all of us have been on the first side of the coin, we know how much forgiving helps. Forgiving gives us the chance to get past the problem, and get back to getting along with our friends and family, which is always a lot more fun than fighting! When we hold grudges for a long time, everybody loses! Many things that cause problems between people are small things, and some of them are downright silly! Hardly worth losing a friend over!

Sometimes, we need to be able to forgive ourselves, too. Since you already know that everyone makes mistakes, don’t be too hard on yourself when you make one. If you’ve said you’re sorry and tried hard to fix the problem, then you’ve been doing the right thing. Don’t hold a grudge against yourself either! Forgive yourself, and get on with it! Life’s too short to spend it being mad at somebody, even if that person is you!

Activity:
Think about the last time you lost or broke something valuable. How long did it take you to admit what you had done? When you finally said you were sorry, were you forgiven? How did that make you feel?
Hi, friends. Ed here. Well, I’ve done some pretty silly things before, but this one tops them all! We had a Show-And-Tell-About-It at our school this past Friday, and I racked my brain all week trying to come up with something cool to bring to class. I was searching through my dresser drawers when I found gramps’ old gold pocket watch, which he had given to me on my eighth birthday. Gramps told me I deserved it because I was growing up to be such a responsible person. It looks like it’s from the 14th century, but, amazingly it still works! Well, that is, until the accident. Unfortunately, what I did was anything but grown up, and nothing like being responsible.

I took the watch to Mr. Salam Ander’s class, and the kids loved it! I told some stories that Gramps had told me about when he was my age, including how the watch was handed down by his grandfather to him. Then, after I left class I was walking down the hall, acting really cool, swinging Gramps’ watch by its gold chain. Suddenly, I let go by accident and the watch smashed against the wall. Yikes, what an awful sound! There were bits of glass and watch parts everywhere! Gramps’ precious watch was ruined! There I was in the middle of the hall, tears rolling down my face. All I kept thinking about was the look on Gramps’ face when I told him how careless I had been. I collected all the pieces I could find and stuffed them in my jacket pocket.

When I got home from school, Gramps was sitting on the front porch, reading a book. I said hello nervously, and rushed inside. I couldn’t bring myself to tell him! I didn’t tell him that evening, and I tossed and turned in bed all night. In the morning, Mom asked me what was wrong, but I just said “Nothing.” Boy, that couldn’t have been further from the truth! All Saturday I worried about Gramps finding out.

Finally, after dinner I couldn’t stand it any longer. I asked Gramps if he would go for a walk with me. After a few minutes I got up the nerve to tell him.

“You did what?” he said, his eyes nearly popping out of his head. I told him how sorry I was for not being responsible. Boy, was he angry! Then he launched into one of his lectures about maturity and respect for others. At the end of our walk, I felt about two inches tall. I went into my room and just sat there for hours, thinking about what a terrible thing I had done. Then, just as I was getting ready for bed, there was a knock on my bedroom door. It was Gramps. “Can I talk to you Ed?” he asked. Then Gramps did something that really surprised me. He apologized to me for getting so angry about the watch! It turns out Gramps had broken the very same watch when he was a kid! He said he knew it was an accident, and that he forgave me. Well, I still felt awful about the watch, but I felt a whole lot better being forgiven!

Monday after school, Gramps and I went down to Sampson’s Jewelry Store and brought the pieces of the watch. Mrs. Sampson said it would take a few weeks, but she thought it could be fixed. I offered to pay Gramps back out of my allowance, which will probably take a year or two!

**Questions:**

1. In what ways was Ed irresponsible?

2. Why did waiting to tell Gramps make the situation worse?

3. How did Gramps react? What did he do later that surprised Ed?

4. Why did Gramps forgive Ed? How did Ed feel after he was forgiven?

5. How did Ed and Gramps solve the problem of the broken watch?
WHAT MAKES A GOOD FRIEND?

Directions: If you've been reading Project:Solution newspapers this year, you've probably learned about several different topics. All of the scrambled words below have appeared on title pages of the paper, and all are related to forgiving.

P-R-O-R-S-E-N-L-T-I-Y-I-S-B
G-N-N-R-U-T-R-I-U
N-A-R-C-I-G
S-T-E-R-C-N-G-I-P-E
L-V-S-I-G-O-N
E-R-U-C-A-O-G
Y-N-H-E-T-O-S

ANSWERS:
- Honesty
- Courage
- Soothing
- Respecting
- Caring
- Resolutions
IN THE NEWSPAPER

Directions: Sometimes it’s easy to tell how someone is feeling, just by looking at their face. The newspaper is filled with pictures of interesting faces displaying a wide range of emotions. Try to find as many different kinds of emotions as possible. Be sure to look for a face that looks apologetic, and one that looks forgiving, too.

A HAPPY ENDING

Directions: Write a short story about the last time you and a good friend had a fight or disagreement. How did you resolve the situation? Did apologizing and forgiving contribute to the happy ending?

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Lenny and Buddy were the best of friends. From birth they were basically inseparable. Their mothers lived across the street from each other, and every afternoon Lenny and Buddy played together in a big playpen in Buddy’s mom’s living room. They were easy babies, because they were so good at entertaining themselves. Their favorite thing was to squeeze each other’s noses, and yank each other’s ears. As soon as they were old enough to giggle and guffaw, that’s how they spent their time. The sound of laughter wafted through the house, and tickled their mothers’ hearts.

In kindergarten, Lenny and Buddy were already known as the class clowns. They were forever making jokes, or playing harmless tricks on their classmates. Although sometimes it was a little much for Mrs. McGillvery, their kindergarten teacher. Even she couldn’t help laughing at their shenanigans. She laughed especially hard when the boys squeezed each other’s noses, and yanked each other’s ears. As they grew older, their special gift for making people laugh grew, too. At night, they would write and rehearse comedy skits, which the principal of the school let them perform once a month during assembly. Word spread quickly about the comedy team of Lenny and Buddy. They were featured on a local news show, and several articles appeared in newspapers and magazines. They often joked about how strange it was to be famous just for being funny!

When Lenny and Buddy graduated from high school, a talent agent approached them about doing a comedy tour around the country. They agreed, and their traveling show was a huge success. From town to town, and city to city, Lenny and Buddy made the concert halls and auditoriums rock with laughter. As always, the bit with the noses and the ears brought down the house.

Then one day a strange thing happened. Lenny and Buddy did something that wasn’t very funny. They had a fight. It started out from a little disagreement over which costumes to wear on a late-night television appearance. The argument turned into a bitter struggle between best friends. For days, Lenny and Buddy refused to speak to each other. They rode in separate cars, ate in separate restaurants, and stayed in separate hotels. At night, they performed on stage together, but the sound of laughter in the audience was faint. When they got to the part with the noses and the ears, they squeezed and yanked a little harder than usual. Somehow, their gift for entertaining people had disappeared. Their agent knew what the problem was, but he couldn’t make the two comedians see eye to eye. Or nose to nose, or ear to ear for that matter.

Then one night, Lenny’s mother and Buddy’s mother came to see the show. It was the first time in five years that the show wasn’t sold out. When the two men came on stage, it was obvious to the two women that something was wrong. At intermission, their moms went backstage to talk to their sons. They started telling stories about the two babies laughing together in their playpen. They showed their sons photographs they had taken when the boys were six months old, two years old, 10 years old and 20. In each picture, the boys were smiling and goofing for the camera. One picture in particular made them both howl with laughter. For a moment they forgot why they were mad at each other. Suddenly, they both realized how silly their argument was. Seeing their friendship in a lifetime of photos made them understand how important it was to get back to what they did best: cracking people up!

So Lenny said he was sorry, and Buddy forgave him. Then Buddy said he was sorry, and Lenny forgave him. Then they squeezed each other’s noses, yanked each other’s ears, and went out to give their funniest show in years!
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ometimes people argue about silly things. But some-
times, people have disagreements about serious issues,
such as religion, race, gender, or the way people choose
to live their lives. Throughout history, entire nations have
gone to war over these kinds of issues. Imagine you
knew someone who disagreed with everything that you
believed in, or who disliked you because of the clothes
you wore or the color of your skin. Chances are you’d stay as far
away from that person as possible, and instead, you’d probably stick
with those kids who treated you with respect and wanted to be your
friend.

Well, this is a story about an 18-year-old girl named Keshia Thomas,
who didn’t stay away from someone who had no interest in being her
friend, and who had little respect for her beliefs or the way she lived
her life. This person was in great danger and needed Keshia’s help,
and, regardless of their differences, she risked her own life to save his.
One afternoon in June of 1996, a man named Albert McKeel, Jr. was
nearly beaten to death by an angry group of people. Instead of just
standing by and watching, Keshia threw herself on top of him to
shield him from a barrage of kicks and punches. It was an unbeliev-
ably courageous, and forgiving, thing to do.

Her incredible act of human kindness touched people all across the
country. Her story has appeared in magazines and on television
shows. But Keshia Thomas is more than forgiving and brave, she’s
extremely modest too. She said, “A lot of kids do the right thing. They
just never get the attention.” Two months after the incident, the
Congress of Racial Equality honored Keshia with its Harmony Award,
and a Michigan businessman donated $1000 toward her tuition at
Louisiana State University. After completing college, Keshia is planning
on joining the Peace Corps, to spread her good will throughout the
rest of the world.

VOCABULARY:

Gender: identifying someone as male or female.
Barrage: a heavy attack.
Tuition: the cost of attending school.
**TIPS**

1) Forcing a child to say he’s sorry when he’s not really inclined to do so, may not be the most effective approach. It might make more sense to explain to him the consequences of his actions, which may have involved hurting another child or damaging someone else’s property. If your child can see how he might have been affected if the shoe was on the other foot, he may think twice about repeating the behavior. The same approach can be used in a positive way to explain the benefits of forgiving. Modeling “I’m sorry” and “I forgive you” in appropriate situations in front of your child, or in relation to your child, may be the most effective method of all.

2) Often, forgiving is more difficult than apologizing. Sometimes it’s easier for kids (and adults) to remain angry or hold a grudge than to “let it go.” How you handle similar situations with your child will leave an indelible impression, good and bad.

3) Too many kids blame themselves for situations that are completely out of their control, especially with family issues that touch them the deepest. Help your child to understand where her responsibility begins, and ends.

4) As always, catch your child doing the right thing. If you see your child taking the courageous initiative to apologize or forgive, show him how much you appreciate his efforts at “fixing” a problem.

**FAMILY ACTIVITY**

As kids get older, they may be less likely to discuss freely their feelings about different things. Here’s a fun activity that may open up some discussions about experiencing different kinds of emotions. Sit down together and watch an appropriate television show with the sound turned off. Can you tell just by watching their faces what each character is feeling? Also, shows about families are filled with conflicts and resolutions. If you catch a show that has a particularly interesting situation, discuss how your family might have resolved the problem in a different way. Could apologizing or forgiveness play a part in the solution?

**RESOURCES**


**FAMILY PLEDGE CARD**

Our family has completed the Family Page together.

__________________________
Child’s name

Family members:

__________________________
__________________________

School: ___________________________________

Teacher/grade: ___________________________

For more information about Project: Solution, call 726-8918 or 1-800-351-1227, ext. 8033 or 8918.