



Students perform short stories in order to understand the different aspects of forgiveness.



Copies of the individual stories on the “Act On Forgiveness” Handout, enough so that every student in each group has one; Props including a map, stone, stick, feathers in a pillowcase, stepladder (optional), large number 6 drawn on or cut out of butcher paper, test or paper with a red F written on the top, garbage can with a few papers in it.

Total Prep Time: 10 mins.



As this is the third Monday of the month, please consider sharing or re-sharing the Monthly Kick-Off activity, and if appropriate, video at [www.everymondaymatters.org](http://www.everymondaymatters.org). Additionally, a three-minute recap of the previous weeks may add extra context to this week and help connect the dots around the monthly theme.

4 C's	SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING	SERVICE LEARNING
• Critical thinking	• Self-awareness	• Integrated learning
• Communication	• Self-management	• High quality service
• Collaboration	• Social-awareness	• Collaboration
• Creativity	• Relationship skills	• Student voice
	• Responsible decision-making	• Civic responsibility
		• Reflection
		• Evaluation

### GOALS FOR THE WEEK

- Discover what it means to own and admit mistakes in healthy ways, and put those skills into action
- Identify what forgiveness and respect are all about through interactive role-playing
- Visualize the effects that one person’s actions, both positive and negative, can have on society
- Understand how “RIGHT A WRONG” is an important part of this month’s theme, “MONDAY GETS UNDERSTANDING”



## STUDENT ACTIVITY: “ACT ON FORGIVENESS”

- 1) **SHARE THE NAME OF THIS ACTIVITY WITH STUDENTS: “ACT ON FORGIVENESS”**
- 2) **ASK 1-3 QUESTIONS FROM THE LIST BELOW TO WARM STUDENTS UP ON THE ACTIVITY’S FOCUS:**

**\*NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What does the word “FORGIVENESS” mean?**
  - Answer: “FORGIVENESS” means ceasing (stopping) the feeling of resentment toward someone who has offended or hurt you
- **How have you seen forgiveness in action?**
- **What’s the most inspiring case of “FORGIVENESS” you’ve ever heard?**
- **Do you think it’s easier to “FORGIVE” other people or to “FORGIVE” yourself?**
- **When someone “WRONGS” us, why are we sometimes hesitant to let them apologize or allow them to change?**
- **How are “FORGIVENESS” and “UNDERSTANDING” related?**
- **Have you ever “FORGIVEN” someone who didn’t feel bad about what they did?**
  - What was that like?
  - Was “FORGIVING” that person difficult?
  - What gave you the strength to “FORGIVE” them?
- **Have you ever had to “FORGIVE” yourself for something you’ve done?**
  - How did you do it?
- **How can we “FORGIVE” someone while still taking care of ourselves and keeping our boundaries?**
- **What character traits do we need in order to “FORGIVE” someone?**
- **How can “UNDERSTANDING” and practicing “FORGIVENESS” remind us WE MATTER?**
- **How does “FORGIVENESS” help us begin to “RIGHT A WRONG”?**

- 3) **SET UP THE “ACT ON FORGIVENESS” ACTIVITY:**

- **Explain:**
  - “FORGIVENESS” means a lot of different things to different people
  - We’ve all been hurt or offended by another person’s words or actions
  - When that happens, we have two choices: To “FORGIVE” or to stay bitter
  - Sometimes we don’t want to “FORGIVE,” thinking the person doesn’t deserve our “FORGIVENESS”
  - In fact, sometimes a person may “WRONG” us and not even feel bad about it
  - But “FORGIVENESS” is a selfless gift
  - It literally means to “give freely, without reservation”
  - Not only does it stop the offense from causing further pain, but it’s also a gift of freedom we give ourselves in order to heal
  - It helps our hearts give way to “UNDERSTANDING”
  - It reminds us that others have chosen to “FORGIVE” us in the past, too, and we can give someone that same gift
- **Continue:**
  - It’s important to know though, that there is a difference between “FORGIVING” someone and allowing them to continue hurting us
  - It is possible to “FORGIVE” someone without allowing a cycle of pain to continue
  - That type of “FORGIVENESS” takes time and patience, and caution on our part
  - Today we’ll “ACT” out different short stories, each dealing with a different aspect of “FORGIVENESS,” helping us learn a little more about how we can “FORGIVE” others in healthy ways
- **Ask:**
  - Are you ready to “ACT ON FORGIVENESS”?

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#### **4) START THE “ACT ON FORGIVENESS” ACTIVITY:**

- **Explain:**

- In just a moment, you will “ACT” out some stories of “FORGIVENESS”
- As you watch each story, take note of your feelings, impressions, and thoughts, because we’ll discuss them at the end
- We’ll do these in small groups
- Each group will have a specific question to ask the group after they “ACT” out their story
- **Split students into groups depending on the story (note that the number for each story includes the narrator, who will read the story as the others “ACT” it out):**
  - Three students for “Sand and Stone”
  - Three students for “The Feathers” (more may be included in this as village people who were gossiped about)
  - Four students for “The Number Argument”
  - Three students for “Digging up Garbage”
- **Pass out the “Act on Forgiveness” Handout to students in each group and give groups their props**
- **Give students three or four minutes to prepare their story to “ACT” out**
- **Then, have groups come up one by one to perform their stories**
  - Have the narrator read the title of the story and then read the story while the rest of their group “ACTS” it out
- **Allow each group 1-2 minutes to “ACT” out their story**
- **After each story, have the groups ask their story’s questions to all students and have a quick discussion altogether about the question**
  - These questions can be read by any members of the group that did not have a chance to “ACT” in the stories
- **When all groups have “ACTED” out their stories, return the props and gather for follow-up questions**

#### **5) AFTER THE ACTIVITY, ASK 1-3 OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS REFLECT ON WHAT THEY’VE ACCOMPLISHED AND HOW THEY CAN TAKE THIS FORWARD:**

**\*NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What insights or thoughts did you have about the “Sand and Stone” story?**
- **What insights did you have about the “Feathers” story?**
- **What insights did you have about the “Numbers” story?**
- **What insights did you have about the “Digging up Garbage” story?**
- **What did you learn about “FORGIVENESS” from these stories?**
- **How can you share the stories you’ve learned today with someone else?**
- **How will you use these stories to better yourself?**
- **Are there other stories you can think of that illustrate the need to “FORGIVE” others?**
- **What’s one way you will “RIGHT A WRONG,” starting today?**
- **How have you been able to see that WE MATTER as a result of our activity today?**
- **In what ways did you “GET UNDERSTANDING” today?**

#### **6) THANK STUDENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN “ACTING” OUT THEIR STORIES. REMIND THEM THAT THEY CAN CHOOSE TO “FORGIVE” EVERY DAY, AND THAT THE WORLD REALLY NEEDS THEIR COMPASSIONATE AND “UNDERSTANDING” HEARTS.**

#### **7) CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO LOOK FOR SPECIFIC “WRONGS” THEY CAN “RIGHT” IN THEIR LIVES AND TO NOT DELAY. CHALLENGE THEM TO SPEAK KINDLY, “FORGIVE” THEMSELVES, REMEMBER THE GOOD IN OTHERS, AND SEE THINGS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.**

8) CONTINUE TO EXPLORE HOW TO “RIGHT A WRONG” BY LEADING ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING EXTENSION IDEAS.



## EXTENSION IDEAS:

**DO ONE OR MORE OF THESE EXTENSION IDEAS TO BRING THE LESSON FROM 15 MINUTES TO 30 MINUTES OR MORE.**

- 1) **Script Writing:** Allow students to write their own scripts for the stories given. If possible, present them at a school assembly or other school-sponsored activity.
- 2) **Class Stone:** Get a large, smooth rock, and allow students to write the good they have seen others do for them on it, like in the “Sand and Stone” story. Place the rock in a visible place on campus.
- 3) **Give Feathers:** Write the words “Your encouraging words MATTER to me!” on the bottom of the “Feathers” story, and make copies. Give each student a copy and a few feathers. For several days, let them give the story and a feather to someone who speaks kindly. Encourage students to continue giving the feathers they receive to create a cycle of encouragement within the school.
- 4) **Forgiving Ourselves:** Give students a piece of paper and have them write their mistakes on it without showing anyone else. Then have them crumple them up and throw them in the garbage, and remind them that once the papers are in the garbage, students are to “FORGIVE” themselves for those mistakes and move forward.

“**FORGIVENESS DOES NOT CHANGE THE PAST, BUT IT DOES ENLARGE THE FUTURE.**”

- PAUL LEWIS BOESE



## Sand and Stone

There were two friends, Peg and Alex, taking a trip through the desert. On the way, the two became lost because Peg had looked at the map upside down. Alex yelled at Peg, "You got us lost! Now we have to walk much farther and I'm already tired! You are the worst! I can't believe I wanted to travel with you."

Peg was upset by Alex's words, but did not respond. Instead Peg took a stick and wrote in the sand, "TODAY MY BEST FRIEND YELLED AT ME."

Later in the day, the friends came to the edge of the desert where there was a pool of water. Needing a rest, they decided to have a swim. Peg waded out too far and began to struggle. Alex swam out and saved Peg from drowning.

Peg carved into a rock, "TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE." Alex asked, "Why did you write in the sand earlier, when I yelled at you, but now you write in stone?" Peg said, "So your good deed will always be recorded in the stone, but the winds of forgiveness will sweep away your mistake."

### Questions:

- What do we learn from Peg's writings, and how can we apply it to the relationships we have in our own lives?
- How does this story help us learn to RIGHT A WRONG?

Source credit:

"Sand and Stone" adapted by Kami Hayes from a folk tale



## The Feathers

Once there was a woman who spoke badly about those in her neighborhood. She didn't care whether the things she was saying were true or not, and she spread gossip wherever she went.

After a while, the woman felt bad and wanted to change her ways. She went to a wise man in her village and sought counsel. He said, "Take this pillow to the top of the bell tower and let out its feathers." She thought this was an odd request, but did as the old man asked. She ripped the pillow and the feathers got carried away with the breeze.

She came back to the wise man with the empty pillow. He said, "Now go collect all the feathers you released." "But that's impossible!" the woman said. The old man said, "Try."

The woman went back into the village collecting as many feathers as she could. She retrieved many, but could not find them all. She returned to the old man with the feathers she had gathered. He said, "Your words are like these feathers. Once you release them, it is very difficult to get them back." The woman resolved then and there to speak kindly of others. And she did.

### Questions:

- What does this story tell us about the impact of our words and why they MATTER?
- How does that help us RIGHT A WRONG?
- What kinds of words/feathers can we release that speak positively of others?

Source credit:

"The Feathers" adapted by Kami Hayes from a folk story about St. Philip Neri



## The Number Argument

Once there were two friends. On the ground between them was a giant number. They would not stop arguing with each other, each insisting they were right.

"That's the number six!"

"No, that's the number nine!"

"It is obviously the number six. I can see it with my own eyes!"

"Then you must be blind. It is clearly a nine!"

A bystander overheard this conversation, which was becoming more and more heated, and walked over to the two to see what was going on.

"What's going on here?" he asked.

"This person thinks there is a nine on the ground, but it's a six!"

"I told you, it's a nine!"

The bystander said, "Switch places for a moment." Grumbling, they did.

They looked at the number, both surprised.

"Ah! It IS a six!"

"It IS a nine!"

The bystander said, "Standing firmly in your place, you could not see the other person's point of view, but now you can see that you were both right."

### Questions:

- In what ways can we try to see a situation from someone else's perspective?
- How does doing that help us RIGHT A WRONG?

Source credit:

"The Number Argument" written by Kami Hayes, based on a meme illustration



## Digging up Garbage

Kate was having a bad day. She failed a test at school. In bright red marker at the top of the page was the letter F. She looked at it over and over again. She kept thinking about how she stayed up late with friends instead of studying, and how her family might react. Kate felt terrible about it. When she got home, she threw the test in the garbage. But she kept thinking about it. Later in the day, she dug it out of the garbage to look at that bright F again.

Her mother saw her and said, "Kate, what are you doing?"

Kate said, "I failed my test and I just keep thinking about it, so I was looking at it again."

Her mom replied, "Leave it in the garbage. What's done is done, and it won't do you any good to keep digging it up to look at it. That mistake is over. Try again tomorrow."

### Questions:

- In what ways do we sometimes dig up our own mistakes or the mistakes of others?
- How can we "FORGIVE" ourselves for things we've done?
- What do we learn from Kate's mom's response?

Source credit:

"Digging up Garbage" written by Kami Hayes, based on a speech by Shayne Bowen