

**Lesson:  
Forgiveness**

**Length of lesson:  
45 Minutes**

**Materials:**

- **Board or large paper**
- **Videos or online videos**
- **Stories of forgiveness**
- **Writing paper**
- **Pens and pencils**

**Discussion Summary:**

Forgiveness is letting go of anger and resentment you feel towards somebody who has done something to you. Forgiving someone for something they have done to you, no matter how big or small, requires compassion, empathy, and courage. Recognizing the power of forgiveness helps young people maintain healthy relationships, build strong friendships, and think before they act.

**Discussion Questions:**

- **What is forgiveness?**
- **What can forgiveness look like?**

**1.** Ask participants what forgiveness means. Record their ideas as they give them.

**2.** Explain that forgiveness is letting go of anger and resentment you feel towards somebody who has done something to you. You may forgive someone for something minor like bumping into you or taking your seat at Girls Only!. You may forgive someone for something like leaving you out at recess or forgetting to call you on your birthday. You may forgive someone for something major like breaking up with you or physically hurting someone in your family. Forgiveness is not easy and it might take a long time to forgive someone or for someone to forgive you.

**3.** Show videos, online videos, and stories of examples of forgiveness. Share stories such as:

- Elizabeth Eckford was a 15-year old African-American student who attended Little Rock High School in Arkansas in 1957. She is known as one of the Little Rock Nine because she is one of the nine young African-American students who went to the all-white high school after the Brown vs. Board of education decision in 1954. This law made segregation, or separation, of blacks and whites illegal in education; before this, black children and white children could not attend the same school. Many white students were not supportive of this decision and did not treat the black students as equals. On her very first day of high school, Elizabeth had to walk through a mob of white students and grown-ups who were yelling and threatening to hurt her. She was brave but very afraid. During her time at Little Rock High, Elizabeth was threatened and harassed and

even had to have the National Guard come to protect her and the other black students. Elizabeth suffered from nightmares and paranoia for a long time because of her experience at Little Rock High. There is a famous picture of Elizabeth walking to school bravely while the white mob follows her. 34 years after the picture was taken, Hazel Massery, one of the white women shown in the picture yelling, apologized to Elizabeth. They started talking more and Elizabeth forgave her and they are now friends.



- Tariq Khamisa was 20-years-old when he was killed while delivering a pizza. His assailant was 14-year-old Tony Hicks who shot him on orders from an 18-year-old gang leader. After his son's murder, Tariq's dad, Azim Khamisa, didn't seek revenge, but saw two children lost, one forever and one to the state prison system. Azim established the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) to honor his son and to "stop kids from killing kids." He reached out to Ples Felix, Tony Hicks' grandfather and guardian. Together, they have spoken to thousands of children about the "power of forgiveness" in order to break the cycle of youth violence. Tony Hicks pled guilty to murder in 1996 and delivered a remorseful speech at his sentencing, accepting responsibility for his actions and praying for Tariq's dad's forgiveness. Tony was sentenced to prison for 25 years to life. The foundation continues to change the lives of young people by empowering them to make positive and nonviolent choices (TKF).

**4.** Ask participants what they would have done in each situation. Could they have forgiven the person? Why or why not? There is no right or wrong answer!

**5.** Begin a discussion about forgiveness by asking: Why might you want to forgive someone? (ex: they asked for forgiveness; they said they were sorry; they made it up to me; I think they paid enough; I wanted to let go of my own anger; I was over it; it made me feel good to forgive

them) Why might you want someone to forgive you? (ex: you know what you did hurt them; you said you were sorry; you have changed) Who are you hurting if you don't forgive someone? (ex: yourself because the anger and resentment live inside of you) Who benefits from forgiveness? (if it is genuine, everyone!)

