

# CATS WITH CHARACTER

“Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were.” – Cherie Carter-Scott



## Forgiveness

### What Does It Mean?

This month, think of a time when someone hurt you and you tried to forgive them. Share your story with your students. Sometimes sharing a personal story resonates with students.

Then you can use the following dialogue to help you discuss forgiveness with your class:



*“It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.” -Mother Teresa*

Someone has probably treated you unkindly. Maybe someone has told a lie about you, or cheated you, or taken your friends or homework, or told you that you were stupid. Or worse! It shouldn't ever happen, but it does.

What can you do when someone is mean or hurts you? Often, the best thing is to find a way to forgive the person. When you forgive someone, you give up your hurt or angry feelings. You stop blaming the person for being unkind. Part of forgiveness is saying, “I forgive you.” But forgiveness is more than that. When you truly forgive someone, you mean what you say. You let go of the hurt or angry thoughts you have about the person. You forgive the person not just with your words, but with your heart.

You might say, “But being mean is a bad thing to do. Why should I let someone get away with that?” Forgiveness doesn't have to mean that you do nothing when someone hurts you. You don't have to put up with it in silence, either. You can report what happened to a trusted adult, like a parent or teacher. But you can still forgive the person and leave your angry feelings behind.

When you forgive someone, you'll feel better inside. Think about it. When you're angry at someone, you might go around all day scowling, or feeling sad and grumpy. You might think about mean things to do back. What if you hurt someone back? Then you'll have something else to feel bad about. It doesn't feel very good to think mean or angry thoughts. All those bad feelings hurt you inside. They can even make you sick! Really letting go of the feelings can help you feel good inside.

“It's not that easy,” you might say, and you'd be right. Becoming a forgiving person takes courage. But you'll be happier if you learn to forgive.



*“To forgive is the highest, most beautiful forms of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.” – Robert Muller*

There are more reasons to show forgiveness to others. For one thing, people aren't as likely to pick on you anymore if they don't get a reaction. And when you forgive people, they see a new way to act. Maybe the next time they start to do something mean, they'll change their mind. Maybe they'll think about how good it felt to be forgiven.



*“Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.” – Paul Boese*

### **How Can You Be Forgiving?**

Sometimes before you can forgive someone you need to talk to an adult you trust. You might also need to let go of anger you're feeling. When you've done that, it's time to talk to the person who hurt you. By then, you may feel more ready to forgive the person. It's also important to forgive yourself when you've done something you're sorry about.



## **FORGIVE**

**F**ace what happened. Let your feelings out. Cry. Kick a can. Write or draw about it.

**O**pen up your heart and give the person who has hurt you a chance to explain. It's possible she or he didn't mean to hurt you.

**R**eport what happened. Tell the person who hurt you how you feel.

**G**et help from a trusted adult.

**I**magine how the other person might feel.

**V**alue the other person. Try to see what is good in the other person. Then do something nice for him or her, if you can. This is the hardest part, but it will make you stronger.

**E**rase what happened from your mind. Forget it. Only remember what you learned.

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*“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.” - Lewis B. Smedes*



## What if?

Here are some situations for students to think about, write about, talk about, or act out.

1. Your friend tells a lie about you. How might you forgive your friend and stop the lie, too?
2. Your brother steals some money from your bedroom. You ask him to stop, but he keeps on stealing. What might you do to help him stop stealing? What can you do to help yourself forgive him?
3. One day, you get really angry at your best friend. Without thinking, you say something that hurts her feelings. You see the look on her face, and you wish you could take back every word. You do your best to apologize, and your friend says, "That's okay. No big deal." But you can't get that look out of your mind. And you can't believe you said those awful words to someone you care about. Your friend has forgiven you. How can you forgive yourself?



*"There is no love without forgiveness, and there is no forgiveness without love." - Bryant H. McGill*

## Activities to Practice Forgiving

1. Forgiveness Words  
Brainstorm with students, words one can use to show forgiveness. Think of as many different things as possible and role-play scenes where students can use the words. The following are just ideas to get your class rolling:  
Words for forgiving yourself: I've learned from my mistake.  
Words for forgiving someone else: I know you're sorry. I'm not mad anymore.  
Words for talking about what happened: You're nice to me when we're alone. I wish you'd act the same way when other people are around, too.
2. Draw What Happens  
Here's what you'll need:  
\*drawing paper  
\*crayons, colored pencils, or markers  
Instruct your students to draw pictures of good things that can happen when people show forgiveness. For example, they might show a family talking and laughing at supper instead of sitting silent and angry while they eat. Think of others as a class if you would like to. Encourage students to hang their pictures someplace to be a reminder that positive situations come out of forgiving.



"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." - Mahatma Gandhi

3. Unscramble

Solve this puzzle and learn something important about forgiveness.

First, write this crazy sentence on the board. Encourage students to help you unscramble the letters to read a message.

GOFIRNSEVES SI A EYK OT FENPSLUCESEA.  
(Forgiveness is a key to peacefulness.)



Now that the class has solved the puzzle, think about what the message says. Have students consider if they think it is true or not. Have them explore why?

4. Sorry

Find an old "Sorry" board game in a closet or garage sale. Allow students to play the game at center-time or as a reward / incentive.

*\*\*Additional lessons are included in the packet placed in your box.*

### Read Stories about Responsibility

At the end of this packet, I have included a list of books from our library that illustrate responsibility. Many are AR books ☺, and we know that literature is a great vehicle for teaching character!



## When You're Sorry, 5 Ways to Forgive Yourself

**S**ay you're sorry.

**O**ffer your friendship.

**R**epair what you did, if you can.

**R**esist doing it again. This can be hard, but keep trying.

**Y**ank out your bad feelings like weeds, so there's room in your heart to forgive yourself.

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"Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it." - Mark Twain