

MLK Winning Essay by Rafa Corcoran

Has anyone ever done something, or said something to you that made you immediately want to get revenge? It's happened to all of us, but when you eventually do get them back, it doesn't feel quite as good as you thought it would. Why is this the case? The reason we don't feel as gratified as we might think we would is because we know that we made the other person feel just as bad as we did. Instead, we as humanity need to treat people with love instead of anger, which means being sympathetic, and understanding where they might be coming from. Instead of getting revenge on someone who wronged us, we must instead use love to sympathize with their situation, and instead of punishing them, work with them to stop those behaviors, so it doesn't happen to someone else.

Replacing retaliation and revenge with love means sympathizing with the person who mistreated us. Normally, when someone wants to get revenge, it is because they jump to conclusions, and don't understand the full story. When I was in elementary school, one of my closest friends all of a sudden started being extremely mean to me, and I wasn't sure why. At first, I just assumed he had just changed overnight, but as time went on, I realized that that was not the full story. While talking to their cousin, I was informed that the reason they didn't seem to like me was solely due to the fact that they believed I didn't like them. I was shocked to hear this news, and I went from being spiteful toward them, to understanding why they had been treating me differently. If I had never talked to their cousin, and heard their side of the story, I would have never been able to move on from our past troubles, but because I heard what really happened, I was able to understand why he had done what he did, and move past it. The moral of this story is to show that not jumping to conclusions, and attempting to understand the other person's action is a much better alternative than making a rash decision that could forever ruin your relationship.

As well as sympathizing with the person's situation, we must also look toward the future, and pick prevention over immediate punishment. In more severe instances like criminal cases, our justice system needs to understand that instead of punishing those who did wrong by throwing them in jail, we must instead try to correct their poor behaviors. So, when they eventually do get released back into society, they are no longer spiteful and vengeful, but rather understanding of what they did, and that it shouldn't happen again. This method is extremely prominent in the case of Ethan Couch, a sixteen year old boy who was charged with intoxication manslaughter. Couch pleaded guilty, but instead of being vengeful, and punishing Couch by putting him in jail, the judge sentenced him to ten years or probation. In therapy, Couch would learn why his behaviors were wrong, and how to fix them when he returned to society. A big statistic that was brought up during this case was the fact that 80% of teenagers that go into rehab don't commit a crime as severe when they get out, but when they are sent to prison, the statistic flips, and 80% of teens commit a crime to that severity or worse.

Overall, instead of taking immediate action on someone for their wrongdoing against us, we as a society must instead try to understand the person, and why they did what they did, as well as trying to prevent similar crimes from happening again, as opposed to immediate punishment. If we take these actions, instead of revenge and retaliation, we will have built a community based on love, and less conflict and crimes will be a part of our everyday lives.