Forgiveness

BY DIOMARYS NEGRÓN VELÉZ

"Many people hold onto a grudge because it offers the illusion of power and a perverse feeling of security. But in fact, we are held hostage by our anger. It is never too late to forgive. . . I define forgiving as letting someone back into your heart. . . True forgiveness isn't easy, but it transforms us significantly."

—ROBERT KAREN, PH.D., AUTHOR OF "THE FORGIVING SELF." – 2001

A few years ago I went to Puerto Rico for my summer vacation and I had the time of my life! I hadn't been in Puerto Rico for a while so it felt really good to be back there spending time with family and friends - back to everyone and everything I loved and missed for far too long.

One day my father dropped me and my little sisters off at my grandfather's house. It was a place where many memories were to be found. Grandpa had a big yard where my little cousins and I would spend hours playing all kinds of games. And, typical of a little kid, one of my young cousins did something he wasn't supposed to do during one of those games. Well, I was the oldest, and I felt as if I was in charge, so I told him to stop and to behave himself. I gave him a little lecture about what he had done and he got real mad at me and left with a big frown on his face.

Where did he go?

He went to my grandfather and told him that I had yelled at him and that I had hit him.

I didn't do that. I would never put a hand on him or any of my little cousins, or any child for that matter! Unfortunately my grandpa didn't believe me, and sided with my cousin. Grandpa yelled at me, I yelled at him, and it blew into a really horrible argument and hurt-

ful words were spoken. Then he did the unexpected. My own grandfather called me a whore, and he kicked me out of his house and told me that he never wanted to see me again!

I left with my head hung low and tears in my eyes. It was one of the saddest and most upsetting days in my life.

After that I didn't want to speak to my grandpa. I felt hurt and unloved; and yet sometimes I thought I should talk to him and apologize for losing my own temper. You know, that I should be the bigger person. But I always changed my mind at the last minute. I was afraid he would push me away. I remembered those words that he said to me; those harsh and cruel words. I

would think about them often and I'd say to myself - Why did he say that? Doesn't he love me? We were family! How could he have said something like that to his own granddaughter?! No matter how hard I thought about it I could never figure it

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out. And, the more I thought about it, the angrier I became. I was mad at him for hurting me like that, for leaving a scar on my heart, a scar that seemed to never heal. Wouldn't you be angry?

Well, the years went by and in my mind I figured that I had put the whole thing behind me. I thought it had become a part of my past and that it would never rear its ugly head again - but I was so wrong.

My father came to Philadelphia from Puerto Rico one Friday night to surprise my little sister and me. We were so happy to see him again! We went to his house, talked, had some dinner, and then we slept over. The next night, while I was

asleep, my step mom came into my room and said, "Get up, go see your father. He has to talk to you." I rubbed the sleep from my eyes and then ran from my room. I was scared and I was thinking the worst. There he was, standing in the middle of the hallway with his head down. Dad looked up at me, and I noticed that his face was all red and tears were falling from his eyes. After a few seconds of silence he spoke. "Abuelo se murio", those were the only words that came out of his mouth, but those three little words broke my heart.

All I did was cry and cry.

My grandfather was dead.

Knowing that he was gone hurt me. I was devastated right along with my father. But reminiscing on the words that were said on that summer day years ago hurt even more because I held onto that grudge. I was still angry at him for the past and now I was angry at him for dying, leaving me without the chance to

held inside of me for all these years. Letting go of everything was the best thing I did.

I looked deep inside my heart for the part of me that had so much love for my grandfather and then I forgave him. That was something I thought I could never do. Deep inside I know he really loved me and I loved him, too; and that's all that really matters. Now when I think about Grandpa, I think only about our good memories and I've engraved them in my heart so they will never be forgotten.

For those of you who think you can never forgive somebody; you're wrong.

No matter how badly a person hurts you, you should forgive them - even if they never apologize to you. The pain of the past will continue to hurt you if you don't. Re-train your heart to move on. If you don't forgive them, the anger will eat you up inside, and trust me, that is something you don't want to live

Reconciliación

Perdonar es algo que debemos hacer antes de que se haga tarde aunque nos duela mucho. Llevo en mi memoria una ocasión en donde mi abuelo y yo tuvimos un momento terrible de discordia. Fue en unas vacaciones de verano en Puerto Rico cuando fui a compartir con mis familiares. La felicidad de pasar tiempo con mis primos llegó a un terrible fin en un día de juegos. Unos de los primo actuó con malicia e hizo algo indebido. Como prima mayor tome la iniciativa de reprender al primo. El primo llevó la queja al abuelo añadiendo con malicia que yo le grité y le pegué. Desafortunadamente, mi abuelo creyó todo lo que el primo le dijo y entre el abuelo yo hubo palabras muy fuertes y muy feas.

No hubo reconciliación entre mi abuelo y yo en esas vacaciones. Pasaron los años hasta el día que mi padre me dio la mala noticia del fallecimiento de mi abuelo. Mis lágrimas cayeron como una fuente de lluvia y mi dolor al saber que nunca mas podría reconciliarme con mi abuelo fue un golpe muy fuerte. Es difícil perdonar pero más difícil es vivir sin un perdón. No perdonar aquellos que te lastiman duele mucho y deja un mal sabor, perdonar y olvidar te permite volver a amar y vivir una vida llena de paz interior.

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see him again, to talk to him, to make peace with him. There would be no last kiss, no last hug...

Death is final.

A couple of nights later I found myself crying in my bed. I cried so hard that it hurt to breathe. I barely caught my breath and then I would start to cry some more; but in those tears was a cleansing. Yes, in those sobs of remembering was a healing.

I recalled someone who once said, "When someone hurts us we should write it down in sand, where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away, but when someone does something good for us we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it." What wise words.

That night I let go of everything I had

with.

Remember that we're human and that we all make mistakes.

Remember also that everyone deserves a second chance.

Learn to forgive and forget. It will make you a better person.

...And peace will come.

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