

The Apology I Never Gave

When I was younger, I felt that being right was better. I argued about board games. I corrected people mid-sentence. I pointed out minor errors not to be unkind, but to me, correcting something meant that I was helping someone out.

In seventh grade, my best friend and I got into a silent fight. It all started with a minor issue; some opinion, misunderstanding, I cannot even remember now. But I do remember thinking I was right. I held onto that conviction like it was a shield.

We stopped speaking for a week. Then two weeks went by. We sat near each other in class, but the silence between us increased. I kept waiting for her to speak first, for her to realize that I hadn't done anything wrong, but she never did.

Eventually, our friendship faded, and we both moved on, even though, on the outside, it seemed like nothing had happened. On the inside, though, I carried it with me: my guilt over losing not just her friendship but also knowing in the quiet corners of my heart that I had chosen being right over being kind. It was a long time before I could actually say that, and it took even longer to understand what it really meant.

Since then, I have become increasingly aware of my need to correct, explain, and win the small battles. I now ask myself, 'Is this worth it?' There are times when it is. But most of the time, it's not. Most of the time, people just want to be heard.

Personal growth for me has not been loud. It has been quiet and uncomfortable. It looks like slowing down before speaking, giving more people the benefit of the doubt, and learning how to say, 'You might be right,' or even, 'I don't know.'

I never apologized to my friend. I wish I had. But whatever else was lost in her absence, I learned something I still carry: Being right is not being thoughtful. Sometimes, I have to prioritize keeping a connection over being right. Real growth starts when I stop needing to win and start choosing to listen.