

NEVER GIVE UP

Anonymous, 8th Grade

Out of all the different laws of life, "Never give up," means the most to me. I love my mother very much because she taught me this. If you give up, you will never succeed at anything. Everyday of my life, I struggle to "never give up" because I plan to be a doctor.

My mother was a good student in elementary school, junior high school, and up to high school. When she was in high school her parents divorced. She had seven younger brothers and sisters she had to help care for. Her mother was very sick, and in and out of the hospital. Her father left home, but she "never gave up."

My mother was planning to graduate from high school and go to college just like her parents, and older sister and brother. She had a guidance counselor who refused to put her in the honors math classes for two years. She knew something was wrong, but with no one to help her, she became discouraged, she graduated from high school, but she gave up wanting to attend college.

Twenty years later when she was older, my mother thought about college again. A trip to Africa helped her see that she was wasting time. A friend told her that if she still wanted to go to college, it was not too late. She was very afraid, but she went to college anyway.

My mom excelled and kept a 4.0 grade average. She was elected president of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society. She traveled all over America with Phi Theta Kappa. After three years, she graduated valedictorian of her class, and got a scholarship to Columbia University. She is so happy she "never gave up."

Before graduating, she was in a very bad car accident that burst her heart. For a year she walked around feeling weak, not knowing what was wrong. She was admitted to the hospital multiple times, but no one helped her. She "never gave up" and kept going to work and school. She went to the doctor at Columbia, and he told her she needed heart surgery immediately or she could die.

My mom had to stop going to Columbia to have surgery. She felt very bad and she felt like another obstacle was being put in her way, but she "did not give up." Even when she was sick and injured, she "never gives up." Every day she tells me to keep working hard to achieve my dream of becoming a doctor. She also says that, if she had kept going after high school, she would be doing much better.

My mother almost gave up her dream years ago and she waited a long time to try again. Now she says she will "never give up." To this day, she continues to be a role model in my life, because she continues to show me why I should "never give up."

LOVE IS EVERYWHERE

Anonymous, 11th Grade

Love can reach so many levels, particularly love for people, such as family, friends, or for the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. When we are children, all we understand is the simple truth that when someone said they loved you, you felt special and needed. But as we grow older the definition gets extremely confusing for some, because not everything is so black and white anymore. Love does not only involve how people feel about other people, but how we feel about almost everything else. The love of nature, the love of life and of creation, all of it. People are faced with choices they never dreamed of, and that is why my law of life is love.

When I was very young, I developed a love of all kinds of music and inherited that love from my parents. I grew up listening to almost everything ranging from r&b, salsa, country, gospel, and many other genres of music. It seems that whatever kind of music I was listening to, everyone was talking about love. Lyrics about how love had shaken their hearts, or about how people can't wait to fall in love, or about what they would do for the person they loved and various others. As I grew older, listening to music stopped being about singing along with the artist to some catchy tune. I began to actually interpret what the writers were saying. Sometimes I liked what the author was saying about love, and other times I didn't. No one wants to hear that you can get your heart broken by loving someone completely.

But I continued to dig deeper until I reached the roots. And, whether or not the lyrics I read were about the hardships in finding and keeping love, or letting it go, they always left me with the feeling of amazement. I would watch television and observe the many couples on various shows, as people put lyrics in motion. I saw couples in perfect bliss, and I saw the faces of the dejected. I would even watch how my own family related to each other, and I relished the thought of one day adding to the prevailing family unit. I tried to discover why this intriguing thing called love could make people go to such amazing lengths for one another. I watched hearts being broken and relationships shattered, but yet still people were destined to fall in love. With love comes amazing things like the feeling of belonging. But with the good comes the bad and not everything can always be sunshine and roses.

I believe love can begin to resemble a kaleidoscope—every choice one makes regarding it can change everything. Love is the driving force of our lives. It fuels us to succeed, to be more than content with what we have. If we lived without love, no one would be moved to do anything worthwhile. What a sad world that would be. If we could live without love, then maybe we would all know some peace, but our lives would be hollow. And with that hollowness, who could possibly be happy? To love is to sacrifice, whether we want to or not. We learn to adapt to situations just so we can stay in love.

The lyrics "The Greatest Thing You'll Ever Learn, Is Just To Love, And Be Loved In Return" were written by Eden Ahbez. They words that I have absorbed over the years when they were sung by various artists. The artist may have changed, but the significance always remains the same. Even though there are many lessons in life, none are greater than experiencing what love has to offer.

To know love is simply to live life. With all that surrounds us, beyond all the fear of being alone in this crazy world, there is still the security of knowing that love is always right around the corner, in the form of something wondrous. In the end, all we have to do is seek it out.

FORGIVENESS OVERPOWERS HATE

Anonymous, 11th Grade

Most people live their lives based on hate that they have for others. They believe that the only way to survive is to hold up a wall of hate, not letting anyone in but themselves. A lot of people think that their law of life is hate. That is all they have ever learned. Personally, my law of life is "Forgiveness." I think the only way to survive is to forgive. It is the key to happiness.

Many people took the time to learn how to forgive. I took the time to observe how they felt before they forgave someone and how they felt afterwards. My mother showed me that being a bigger person is being able to forgive. Throughout my mother's life she never practiced hatred. She showed love for anyone she thought needed it. She always told me "If you see someone who feels nothing but hate, pray for them. And hope that one day some kind of happiness comes into their lives." She thought that to hate someone is only to hate yourself. So I'm trying to change my ways, so I can be at a better place, and be able to put myself in better surroundings.

All my life I practiced nothing but hate. I had hate for everyone that I thought hated me, and for anyone who hated themselves. I had to learn the hard way that hate brings nothing but misery. I stayed to myself until I couldn't take it anymore. I decided to forgive anyone who had done any wrong doing to me, hoping to find myself in the process. Later on in life, I forgave every wrong thing that anyone had done to me. In return, I asked God to give me happiness. And to my surprise he did just that!

In order to forgive, you have to learn how to understand what other people are going through. The easiest thing to do is to hate someone or something. The hardest thing to do is learning to forgive someone. To me, forgiveness is not just saying "I forgive you." It means understanding what the person did and why they did it. And how can you take their weakness and try to help them make themselves stronger?

I realized that hate only disowns someone for their own faults. Everyone is human. How could I honestly disown someone for their weakness, when I myself have my own faults? To blame someone for a mistake is not human and, in my eyes, everyone is the same. You can never think that you are better than anyone else. Forgiveness is will power and love. It is a communication with someone on a higher level even though they show weakness. Forgiveness is helping someone in their time of need.

I chose to forgive rather than the hate. I no longer look down upon anyone. Being able to help people take their hate and help them become a stronger person is what makes me happy. It makes them a stronger person, and in the process makes me a stronger person also. Being able to forgive is the greatest gift in the world. So, you understand why "Forgiveness" is my Law of Life. Remember it's easier to forgive, than to learn how to hate.

STAY STRONG

Tonju Hunt, 5th Grade

Have you ever had to go through seeing your mom go in and out of the hospital? My "Law of Life" talks about how I struggled to stay strong and not break down in front of my family. It was a few years ago when I was living on Franklin Place, a street located in Plainfield, New Jersey. My mom was out of remission, and I was really too young to know what that meant. She wasn't feeling all that good that year, and she was crawling back and forth to the bathroom. She then told me that she had Crohn's Disease. Crohn's Disease causes inflammation in the lower intestine, called the ileum. However, it can affect any part of the digestive tract from the mouth to the anus. Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease (I.B.D.).

My sister and I cared for my mother in her time of need. We gave her pills, sandwiches, and water. At that time, I didn't know what was going to happen to her. I was only four years of age, and I didn't understand why this was happening to my mom.

When we moved back to my grandma's house, my mom got worse, and she kept going back and forth to the doctor. Living at my grandmother's house was a little easier on my sister and I, since she was able to help us out with my mother. As I got older, I started to understand my mom's disease.

Her condition was up and down, like a seesaw. In the year 1998, she needed surgery. The surgery would alleviate her pain. It was a scary year for all of us, because the doctor said that she had only one month to live, if she refused the surgery. "Diet!" I screamed silently in my head. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The thought of my mother not being here with me was heart wrenching. I started to cry. I felt pain and fear in my heart. My mom told me not to worry, and that everything would work out.

Even though I am the youngest child, my older sister didn't really understand my mom's condition and how serious it was. She also didn't understand how sad I really felt deep down inside. My mom told me to stay strong. She said that if she were to die, my sister and I had each other, and that she would always be with us in spirit. The day of the surgery, I was a nervous wreck. I was jumpy, and couldn't think straight. I felt as if I was going to have a nervous break down. Every time I was about to cry, a vision of my mom would appear and whisper, "Stay strong." I told myself to stay strong because I know she wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

As time slowly passed, we waited patiently in the hospital for the doctors to return with information regarding my mother. The waiting room

was so quiet that you could have heard a pin drop. The doctor later came in, and we were excited and worried at the same time. We were so excited that we didn't let the doctor say anything. Then, silence came over the room. The doctor said that she survived the surgery, and that she would be in a whole lot of pain for a few days, and that we had to take real good care of her. I was so relieved. It was like the happiest day of my life. Even though she wasn't going to come home right away, I was still happy to know that she was going to live, and that God gave her another chance. The first year of remission, my mom did not feel pain in her stomach at all. The second and third years were not very good for her because the Crohn's Disease came back.

She got treatments on a regular basis to help keep the disease tamed. I was very disappointed to hear that she was not well again. I wish that she could have stayed in remission. This summer my mom went to the hospital and I knew the drill. But this time she went in an ambulance, and that was one of the worst things happening at that time. Each time she went to the hospital, I was there with her. During that time, I really didn't want to be bothered by anybody. I went to the hospital everyday until she came home. I had fun doing that and seeing my mom recover from her sickness.

In spite of all the pain that my mom endures, she continues to show me that she has kept the strength that was passed on to me, her descendant. She can spend time with us as a mother, friend, and companion. My mom is the "Love of my Life." I have always survived with a smile. I love you Mommy.