

# [Taking revenge or granting forgiveness](https://assignbuster.com/taking-revenge-or-granting-forgiveness/)

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When somebody feels hurt or betrayed, a variety of emotions arise urging the individual to take action. This action could either be to take revenge or opt for forgiveness. Revenge is the act of harming as a response for being hurt, while forgiveness is the letting go of the feelings of hurt. With 20% of homicides in the U. S being revenge-motivated it is important to be able to understand why some people opt for revenge while others opt for forgiveness. This essay will first identify the reasons as to why some individuals prefer forgiveness over revenge. It will then look at how romantic couples use revenge as a beneficial tactic in their relationship. After this, it will look at how different personality types can influence an individual to either forgive or take revenge while also looking at how various life circumstances and experiences can influence an individual’s decision to forgive. Finally, it will come to the conclusion that despite there being some benefits in taking revenge, depending on the individual’s life circumstances, it may be better for both the individual and those surrounding the individual to forgive and forget.

The reason why individuals prefer forgiveness over revenge is that the cost of revenge outweighs the benefits. There is a common theme in the literature that states that revenge is harmful to the perpetrator, the victim and the relationship between them. There are some instances where harming a relationship could cause more damage than good. McCullough (2001) uses the relationship between a boss and an employee as an example. If a boss insulted his or her employee, it wouldn’t be wise for the employee to seek revenge, as being vengeful in a workplace puts the individual’s job at risk. This can be criticised, however, as McCullough’s (2001) definition of forgiveness puts emphasis on the actions as opposed to the feeling of forgiveness, mentioned in other definitions. Therefore the employee might still feel the emotions of revenge but simply does not act on them due to the cost of losing employment. The choice to forgive can also be seen in romantic relationships, as individuals tend to not retaliate against their partners due to the fear that their actions may cause the relationship to end. Since healthy romantic relationships contribute to an individual’s happiness, hindering the relationship would hurt both their partner and themselves. Despite the criticisms with the definition of forgiveness, there is evidence to suggest that the lack of revenge may have a positive impact on both work and romantic relationships. In contradiction, not all romantic couples resist the urge against revenge, as revenge can sometimes be beneficial in a romantic relationship. In the literature, there is a clear bias against revenge as whenever it is mentioned it is almost always interpreted as being negative. This is not always the case as from an evolutionary standpoint; revenge could have been used to prevent people from taking advantage of an individual. Knowing you could use revenge would reduce stress, restoring an equal balance between you and your perpetrator. In regards to a romantic relationship, revenge can communicate what behaviours are not appropriate, deterring any future wrongdoings by showing the consequences of a certain action. This can strengthen the relationship as each individual understands how the other is feeling, ensuring both individuals are on the same level. Revenge can only be beneficial if it is used in the ‘ right way’ but Boon et al. (2017) fail to mention how this can be done. When individuals are harmed unjustly, emotions such as anger, humiliation and sadness arise, which can cause an individual to act out in revenge without thinking of the consequences. Therefore despite there being some benefits, there is still a large negative risk against using revenge in a romantic relationship.

Personality types can also have an influence on an individual’s choice to forgive or seek revenge in a relationship. In Strelan’s (2007) study, the relationship between forgiveness and the big five personality types were examined. It was discovered that agreeableness was positively correlated with forgiveness towards others, while narcissism correlated with self-forgiveness. This may be due to the traits associated with the agreeableness personality type such as altruism and empathy. There is also evidence to suggest that those high on neuroticism are more likely to be vengeful in comparison to other personality types. The traits associated with neuroticism include jealousy, anger and frustration, all traits that are related to revenge. Those who are high on neuroticism are low in agreeableness, which may be the reason why they opt for revenge over forgiveness. There are some limitations to this trait theory as it doesn’t address personality in depth but instead focuses on the level of the traits. This may be an issue as it doesn’t take into account the context of human experience and how these experiences may impact an individual’s personality. For example, somebody who previously ranked high on agreeableness and low on neuroticism may forgive his or her partner, but if the partner continues to hurt this individual their level of compassion may decrease over time causing them instead to seek revenge. In summary personality types may have an impact on whether an individual chooses to forgive or take revenge, however, experience may alter the individual’s decision overtime despite their personality type predicting otherwise.

Human experience and life circumstances can have an impact on an individual’s decision to forgive. It was discovered in Younger, Piferi, Jobe and Lawler’s (2004) study that college students preferred forgiveness when a relationship was deemed important to them. This differed to adults, as adults choose to forgive in order to maintain their own personal health and happiness. Examining two different age groups and achieving different results demonstrates that various life circumstances can have an impact on an individual’s decision. During college, if a relationship doesn’t work out, the student would lose less in comparison to an adult relationship. The costs of revenge to an adult may include an impact on their romantic partner, financial status and children. This may be the reason why adults prefer to forgive. Since revenge has been associated with negative health outcomes another reason it may be more beneficial for adults to forgive is so their health is prioritised. It is not mentioned, however, the effects of an adult who may demonstrate forgiveness but emotionally still feels betrayed. For example, it may be more beneficial for the children if a woman in a violent relationship didn’t forgive and return to her partner as her children will be impacted by the exposure to domestic violence. In summary life circumstances can have an impact on the decision to forgive or take revenge as losing a relationship has different consequences at different points in an individual’s life. In conclusion, the costs of revenge outweigh the benefits as lack of revenge has positive impacts on work and romantic relationships. However, this is not the case in all romantic relationships as some relationships find revenge to be beneficial in communicating when behaviour is undesired.

Various factors can influence an individual’s ability to forgive or take revenge including personality types, with agreeableness correlating with forgiveness and neuroticism correlating with revenge. Personality traits cannot predict everybody’s behaviour, however, as various life circumstances and events can also influence an individual’s decision to forgive. In short, the most important reason why individuals choose forgiveness over revenge in a romantic relationship is that the cost of revenge outweighs the benefits, however, there are other factors that would influence this decision including personality types and life circumstance.