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A Message Across Time: Stay True to Yourself

Good advice should mean something to people – it should actually be something that others can use. In 40 years, I would like to tell the children of Forest Hills that you need to make sure to stay true to yourself. As a middle school student, I know how hard it is to feel like I need everyone's approval. But you have to find a way to remove yourself from what everyone else thinks. When you are yourself, you are the happiest.

Being yourself is a noble thing. You are setting an example for others by showing them to be their truest self too. It requires integrity and courage during hardships, even when it seems like everyone else is going along with the herd. This can show others who you really are. By being yourself you can strive to be your *best* self.

Another very important message I would like to share is to know who your real friends are. Best friends can really get you through hard times, but toxic friends can impact you in a negative way. False friends might push you to be someone you're not instead of supporting you for who you are, and they may encourage you to do things you shouldn't instead of doing the right thing. Having a few meaningful friendships with people who love and support you is so much more valuable than having dozens of surface-level relationships.

Though these two ideas are both equally important, combining the two makes the best piece of advice I have. Having authenticity in who you are can be so powerful. I believe we all need to take this one step further and be kind to ourselves. When you connect with new people and most importantly yourself, you can really feel a sense of empowerment and strength. Prioritizing strong connections is the best advice I can give someone.

I have struggled to see myself in a positive way at times. It's hard to open up to the world about who you really are. We all face our battles, but how we deal with them is what really

matters. In life it is hard to always know who you are, but staying true to yourself is a message across time that I hope will stay through generations. Can you imagine a world where everyone is the same? It would be so boring. Your future is up to you, so don't hide in someone else's shadow.

As Oprah Winfrey declared, being true to yourself is the "highest honor on Earth." She states that true confidence comes from trusting yourself and loving your own life and where you come from.

Future students of Forest Hills: believe in yourself, you've got this! In the end life is full of beautiful and complicated struggles, but just know you can overcome them if you trust in yourself. You are enough, exactly as you are.