



# Lily and Charlie: A Backyard Friendship

*A story of acceptance, laughter, and learning to see with the heart.*

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The sun was just beginning to dip behind the trees, casting long golden shadows across the backyard. Lily, a young red fox with a curious heart and a streak of white on her tail, crouched low in the tall grass. Her ears twitched. Something was moving near the old oak stump.

Suddenly, a flash of silver darted out—another fox! But not like any Lily had seen before. His fur was a soft, smoky gray, and his eyes sparkled with mischief.

“Tag!” he barked, tapping her shoulder with his paw before sprinting away.

Lily blinked, then grinned. “Oh, it’s on!”

They raced through the yard, weaving between bushes and leaping over fallen branches. They pounced, tumbled, and laughed until their sides ached. They chased rabbits and chipmunks—not to catch them, just for the thrill of the chase. The backyard had never felt so alive.

“I’m Charlie,” the gray fox said, panting as they flopped beneath a shady tree.

“I’m Lily,” she replied, her tail flicking happily. “You’re fast!”

“You’re sneaky,” Charlie grinned. “That’s even better.”

Lily giggled. “I’ve had lots of practice. My brothers never see me coming.”

Charlie rolled onto his back, paws in the air. “Well, I’m going to have to train harder if I want to keep up.”

But just as Lily was about to suggest another round of tag, a deep voice called from the trees.

“Lily! Time to come home!”

It was her father, Rufus. His tone was firm, and his eyes narrowed when he spotted Charlie.

“Now,” he said, more sharply.

Lily’s ears drooped. “I have to go,” she whispered to Charlie. “I’ll see you tomorrow?”

Charlie nodded. "I'll be here."

Back at the den, Lily trudged inside without a word. She skipped dinner and padded straight to her room, curling up in the corner with her nose tucked beneath her tail.

Moments later, her mother, Ginnie, peeked in. "Sweetheart? What's wrong?"

Lily lifted her head, eyes misty. "Poppa made me stop playing with Charlie. I don't understand. We were just having fun."

Ginnie stepped inside and sat beside her. "Charlie... he's a gray fox, isn't he?"

Lily nodded. "So what? He's nice. He's my friend."

Ginnie sighed softly. "Some foxes were raised to believe that red foxes should only play with red foxes. That it's wrong to mix. But that doesn't make it true."

"But why?" Lily asked. "Charlie didn't do anything wrong."

"No, he didn't," Ginnie said, brushing Lily's fur gently. "And neither did you."

Lily looked up. "Then I'm going to talk to Poppa. First thing tomorrow."

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## **Breakfast and Big Feelings**

The next morning, Lily sat at the breakfast table, quietly nibbling a blackberry muffin. Her father, Rufus, rustled the newspaper with his paw, but he kept glancing at her from behind the pages.

"You're awfully quiet this morning, Little Leaf," he said gently.

Lily looked up, her eyes steady. "Poppa... why did you make me stop playing with Charlie yesterday?"

Rufus folded the paper and set it aside. "Because... well, he's a gray fox. And we're red foxes. Some foxes think it's better to stay with our own kind."

"But why?" Lily asked. "Charlie's nice. He's funny and kind and he doesn't care what color I am. We were just playing."

Rufus sighed, rubbing the back of his neck. "When I was your age, I was told that red foxes and gray foxes didn't mix. That it was safer that way. I guess I never questioned it."

"But that's not fair," Lily said, her voice trembling. "Charlie is my friend. He makes me laugh. He's not scary or mean. He's just... Charlie."

Rufus looked at her for a long moment. “You really care about him, don’t you?”

“Yes,” Lily said. “And I think it’s wrong to judge someone before you know them. Isn’t that what you always tell me?”

Rufus’s ears drooped. “You’re right. I did say that.” He reached across the table and took her paw in his. “I’m sorry, Lily. I let old fears get in the way. Thank you for reminding me what matters.”

Lily’s eyes lit up. “So... I can play with Charlie again?”

“Yes,” Rufus smiled. “And maybe next time, I’ll come meet him too.”

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### **Forever Friends**

That afternoon, Lily bounded into the backyard, her heart light as a feather. Charlie was already waiting by the oak stump, tail swishing with excitement.

“You came back!” he said, grinning.

“Of course I did,” Lily beamed. “And guess what? My Poppa says we can play as much as we want.”

Charlie’s ears perked up. “Really?”

“Really,” she said. “He understands now.”

Charlie wagged his tail. “That’s awesome! I was worried you wouldn’t come.”

“I almost didn’t,” Lily admitted. “But I talked to him. And he listened.”

The two foxes leapt into the grass, chasing butterflies and tumbling through the leaves. They laughed, they played, and they promised—right there beneath the whispering oak—that they would be friends forever.

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### **Virtue Spotlight: Acceptance**

True friendship sees beyond fur, feathers, or form.

It begins with an open heart.

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 **Told by Russ the Storyteller**

 **Delivered by Carl the Carrier Pigeon**

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# Something to Think About

Have you ever made a friend who looked or lived differently than you?

What did you learn from them?

Did it change how you see the world — or yourself?

Lily and Charlie remind us that friendship isn't about matching fur or fitting in.

It's about laughter, kindness, and seeing each other with open hearts.

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## Virtue Summary: Acceptance

Acceptance is the practice of welcoming others as they are — with open hearts, open minds, and open arms. It means seeing beyond differences in appearance, background, or belief, and choosing connection over judgment.

When we accept someone, we say:

“You belong here. You matter. You’re safe with me.”

Acceptance builds trust, deepens friendships, and creates communities where everyone feels valued. It helps us grow in empathy, understanding, and kindness — even when we don't fully agree.

In stories like Lily and Charlie's, acceptance is the bridge between fear and friendship. It teaches us that love doesn't need matching fur or perfect words — just a willingness to listen, learn, and care.

## Why It Matters:

-  Acceptance helps children feel seen and loved for who they are.
-  It encourages curiosity and emotional growth.
-  It reduces conflict and builds peaceful relationships.
-  It creates a world where everyone has a place.



# Word Search: “Words of Acceptance”

Find the hidden words that celebrate kindness, understanding, and friendship.

Words may go forward, backward, up, down, or diagonally.

A	Q	K	I	N	D	N	E	S	S	S	O
S	C	X	C	F	T	Y	H	N	M	F	P
K	O	C	P	O	K	M	N	H	Y	O	E
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	H	I	P	R	N
R	E	F	V	P	B	H	U	I	K	G	H
T	S	G	B	N	T	D	S	Q	C	I	E
P	P	L	J	F	D	A	A	D	B	V	A
Q	E	W	H	R	E	T	N	Y	U	E	R
A	C	S	D	F	G	H	J	C	K	N	T
Z	T	X	C	V	B	N	M	L	E	E	E
K	J	H	G	F	D	S	A	P	F	S	D
U	N	D	E	R	S	T	A	N	D	S	V

Words to Find (8):

ACCEPTANCE, FRIENDSHIP, KINDNESS, RESPECT, UNDERSTAND, INCLUSION,  
OPENHEARTED, FORGIVENESS



## Fill-in-the-Blank: “Words of Acceptance”

Use the word bank to complete each sentence with the best-fitting virtue word.

Word Bank:

ACCEPTANCE FRIENDSHIP KINDNESS RESPECT UNDERSTAND INCLUSION  
OPENHEARTED FORGIVENESS

1. True \_\_\_\_\_ means welcoming others, even when they’re different from us.
  2. Lily and Charlie’s \_\_\_\_\_ grew stronger because they listened and laughed together.
  3. When someone makes a mistake, offering \_\_\_\_\_ helps everyone heal.
  4. To \_\_\_\_\_ someone is to see the world through their eyes.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ is treating others with care, even when we disagree.
  6. A \_\_\_\_\_ heart is one that stays curious, gentle, and brave.
  7. \_\_\_\_\_ means making sure everyone feels seen, safe, and valued.
  8. A small act of \_\_\_\_\_ can brighten someone’s whole day.
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## Fill-in-the-Blank: “Words of Acceptance” — Answer Key

1. True ACCEPTANCE means welcoming others, even when they’re different from us.
2. Lily and Charlie’s FRIENDSHIP grew stronger because they listened and laughed together.
3. When someone makes a mistake, offering FORGIVENESS helps everyone heal.
4. To UNDERSTAND someone is to see the world through their eyes.
5. RESPECT is treating others with care, even when we disagree.
6. An OPENHEARTED heart is one that stays curious, gentle, and brave.
7. INCLUSION means making sure everyone feels seen, safe, and valued.
8. A small act of KINDNESS can brighten someone’s whole day.

## Word Search Answer key

A	Q	K	I	N	D	N	E	S	S	S	O
S	C	X	C	F	T	Y	H	N	M	F	P
I	N	C	L	U	S	I	O	N	Y	O	E
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	H	I	P	R	N
R	E	N	J	P	B	H	U	I	K	G	H
T	S	C	B	N	T	D	S	Q	C	I	E
P	P	L	J	F	D	A	A	D	B	V	A
Q	E	J	H	R	E	T	N	Y	U	E	R
A	C	S	D	F	G	H	J	C	K	N	T
Z	T	X	C	V	B	N	M	L	E	E	E
K	J	H	G	F	D	S	A	P	F	S	D
U	N	D	E	R	S	T	A	N	D	S	V



## **Lily and Charlie playing in the Meadow.**

**Proverbs 17:17 – *"A friend loves at all times..."***