

Trust, Promises, and Good Friends

Sarah was 16 and when her mom saw that her grades were slipping she said “No parties until you get your grades up.” This led to a nasty fight with Sarah calling her mom unfair and her mom calling Sarah irresponsible. Later Sara tried a different approach.

“You’re right,” she said. “School is important and I will do better, but Emily’s having her Sweet 16 party Saturday, and I promised Jessica I’d go with her. If I promise to do better at school, can I go, please?”

Sarah’s mom reluctantly said, “Okay, but only if there is no drinking at the party.” Sarah replied, “I don’t know if others will be drinking but I promise if Jessica or I see anyone drinking, I’ll call you to pick us up.”

“Okay,” her mom said, “but if you let me down, you can forget about getting that used car we discussed.”

At the party, two boys who were clearly high offered pot to lots of the girls, including Sarah and Jessica. Some said yes, but Sarah and Jessica said no. Then Jessica said, “We better call your mom.”

Sarah: “No way! It’s totally unfair that we can’t stay just because someone else is smoking pot, besides my mom only talked about drinking, and no one is drinking.”

Jessica: “Come on. You know your mom won’t buy that. It isn’t worth getting her super upset and losing the right to get your car.”

Sarah: “Maybe, but she’ll never know.”

Jessica: “If you don’t call your mom I will.”

Sarah: “If you do, you’ll never be my friend again.”

Jessica got mad : “I’m just trying to look out for you!”

Sarah: “I’ve already got a mom. I need you to be my friend.”

Jessica: “I’m trying to be your friend but you are making me your accomplice. Your mom trusts me and you’re asking me to lie or coverup for you. That’s not fair.”

Sarah: “You don’t have to lie unless you are asked and she’ll never ask you.”

Jessica: “And if she does? I don’t think you are being a very good friend.”

Jessica called her parents to pick her up saying she didn't feel well. She told Sarah she wouldn't say anything about the pot.

Sarah stayed at the party.

The next morning Sarah's mom asked, "Was there any drinking or drugs at the party?" Sarah hesitated for a moment because she asked about the drugs but she trusted Jessica not to say anything so she said: "Of course not. I would have called you if there was."

"Really? Emily's mom called to tell me that quite a few kids were smoking marijuana, but she wanted me to know you were offered some and you refused. Is that true?"

What do you think Sarah should say now?

What should Sarah's mom do?

Do you think Sarah should be rewarded for not accepting the marijuana or punished for breaking her promise? Or both?

What about Sarah's lie when her mom did ask about marijuana?

Did Sarah actually break her promise? Did she break the spirit of the promise?

How does the technicality that her mom didn't mention drugs in the first conversation affect trust?

Was Jessica being a good friend or bad friend? What would you have done if you were Jessica?