

Friendship

What is it to be a good friend? Suppose that you are planning to go to the movies Friday night with your cousins who are in town for the evening. You're really looking forward to hanging out with them. Then your best friend calls you on Friday afternoon to report that he has just been asked out by the person he most wants to date. You are soooo excited for him. But it turns out that there is a little problem: your friend had agreed to babysit for his little sister so that his parents can go to their high school reunion. He's sure that you would be willing to fill in for him so that he doesn't miss this longed-for opportunity.

What should you do? Do you owe it to your best friend to change your plans so that he can go on his dream date? What sorts of things should you consider in making your decision? How important are the *feelings* of the various people who will be affected by your decision: you, your friend, your cousins? Suppose that your cousins would understand if you were to change your plans but your friend's little sister is a brat so you know that you will have a miserable Friday night. Or suppose you haven't seen your cousins in a while and you miss them. Are family relationships more important than friendships?

You already know that friendships can be very complicated, especially as you get older and find yourself having to make difficult decisions about trust, honesty and loyalty. Like it or not, these are *ethical* decisions, ones that are deeply connected to your developing view of what it is to be a good person. Though Aristotle, one of the greatest philosophers of all time, said that a friend is "a single soul in two bodies," it is pretty clear that even the very closest of friends can find themselves with conflicting desires.

Of course, not everyone we call a friend is a person to whom we are especially close. There might be plenty of people you do things with, maybe teammates or lab partners, with whom you are friendly but you really don't know them very well. This is particularly obvious in the case of Facebook friends where a person can have thousands of "friends" she has never even met. Suppose that you had no friends other than Facebook ones. Is it possible to have as a friend someone you'd never met but whom you could trust with your deepest thoughts and who

would be there in times of need? Is being “face-to-face” necessary for real friendship?

We are now going to show you a number of scenes from different films in which friendships have reached a critical point. We’d like you to discuss with your classmates the ethical issues raised by these clips.