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Debate

What Would You Do?

You're invited to a party. Your friend isn't. Should you go? **By Kristin Lewis**

You are in a sticky situation, and the stress of what to do is keeping you up at night. Here's the deal: You've been friends with Ella since third grade. You're next-door neighbors. You both have a weakness for spicy chips. Everyone at school knows you two are besties.

But this year, you joined the track team. You've made new friends and are having a lot of fun, but it means you are spending less time with Ella.

Recently, Ella has been making some **offhand** comments about how it takes you forever to text her back—even when she knows you're at track practice. You suspect that she might be upset about your new friends.

Your friendship with Ella is important to you, and you make

a point to hang out. In fact, every Friday, the two of you have pizza and a sleepover. It's your tradition.

But now you have a problem. This Friday, one of your track friends, Sophie, is having a birthday party.

You're invited. Ella is not. What should you do?

Moral Dilemma

This problem is what is known as a **moral** dilemma—a tough situation in which the right thing to do isn't clear. Such **quandaries** are a fact of life, whether it's wondering if you should lie to your brother about his bad haircut or confront a friend about a thoughtless remark.

Exploring how you would handle **hypothetical** dilemmas can

prepare you for similar situations in real life.

So back to Ella and Sophie. Your first option is to go to the party and not tell Ella. You'll have to cancel your Friday plans with her, but you'll just tell her something came up. Then her feelings won't be hurt, and you won't miss out.

But you'd be lying to her. Would you start to feel guilty about your deception?

Besides, it's likely that Ella would find out about the party anyway. Someone will say something or post a photo somewhere. It would be far less hurtful for Ella to hear the truth from you.

Which brings us to option two: Ask Sophie if you can bring Ella along.

This might be awkward; Sophie and Ella hardly know each other. If Sophie says it's OK, you'll need to make sure Ella feels comfortable and welcome. If Sophie says no, well, it's Sophie's birthday, and it's only fair that she gets to decide who comes, right?

Here's another idea: Skip the party. But as you scarf down your Friday night pizza, will you start imagining how much fun your track friends are having without you? Will you begin to **resent** Ella? And could that resentment actually weaken your relationship with her?

Maybe you should just tell Ella that you were invited to the party and you're planning to go. But will that hurt Ella's feelings?

Different Perspectives

As you consider your options, it's helpful to think about the dilemma from different **perspectives**, says Dr. Jana Mohr Lone, director of the Center for Philosophy for Children at the University of Washington. For example, you could ask yourself, "What will create the greatest good for the greatest number of people?"

The answer to that question might seem simple: If you skip the party, Ella will be happy. If you go to the party, you *and* your teammates will be happy.

But here's where it gets tricky: If you go, could Ella's *unhappiness* outweigh the happiness that you and your track friends will feel?

You can also think about this dilemma in a larger way. You want to stay close to Ella, but you are also branching out, which is healthy for you. Why not share that thought with Ella in a kind way? Remind her how much you care about her and explain that you're excited about this party.

"Be direct," says Dr. Harriet S. Mosatche, a psychologist who writes an advice column for teens. "Say, 'The entire track team is getting together. I want to go, but I don't want to give up our time together.

Let's find a different day and do something.'"

You can also use the opportunity to ask Ella if the time you're spending with your new friends bothers her and if it would be OK to talk about it. That way, you will both get a chance to open up about your feelings—which, in turn, could bring you closer.

And who knows? Perhaps Ella will be happy for you. Perhaps she'll tell you to go have fun. And perhaps you'll save her a cupcake. ●

Decide What To Do

The author presents several ways the party dilemma could be handled. Choose two, then complete the chart below.



I could ... _____	I could ... _____
_____	_____
Possible outcomes:	Possible outcomes:
1 _____	1 _____
_____	_____
2 _____	2 _____
_____	_____

Evaluate the options above. Then choose the one you think is best. State your opinion in one sentence. This can be your thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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