

Dry Wedding

Aparna is attending Mary's wedding. Because no alcohol is being served, Aparna has snuck in a flask and is passing it around to her friends. Mary catches sight of the flask and walks over to the group. She says: "I'm feeling really nervous, and there is nowhere for me to get a drink! Can I have some of whatever is in that flask?"

Ordinarily, Aparna would not hesitate to share. But yesterday she learned sensitive information that is private so far as she knows: that Mary is a recovering alcoholic who is avoiding drinking any alcohol. (In fact, this is the reason no drinks are being served at the wedding.) In light of this knowledge and uncertain how to respond, Aparna thinks quickly and decides to lie: "Sorry, Mary, it's empty!" But Aparna's friend snatches the flask from her and hands it to Mary, saying: "Quit lying, Aparna, it's still half full."

Aparna freezes. She feels guilty because she knows Mary shouldn't be drinking alcohol. On the other hand, no one else in the group seems to know anything about Mary's substance abuse, and Aparna does not see how she can prevent Mary from drinking without revealing this very personal and private information. Aparna doesn't want to cause Mary embarrassment on her wedding day but at the same time she wants to be a supportive friend.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Was it wrong for Aparna to bring the flask to Mary's wedding?
2. What is Aparna's responsibility in this situation?
3. To what extent does the ethics of this situation depend on Arpana's relationship with the couple? For example, does it matter if she is the groom's sister? Mary's oldest friend? Attending the wedding as a plus one and has never met Mary before?

