Morals for your story

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**Dilemma**
A friend recently broke up with his girlfriend. They'd been having real problems for a while, so it seemed pretty inevitable. I met this girl through my friend and we've hung out a few times as a group. I've had a crush on her for a while, but I've never asked her to hang out because, obviously, she was dating my friend. Would it be wrong for me to ask her out now?

-Crushing on My Friend's Ex

**Responses**
Ethics on the street has a pretty definite (and misogynistic) take on this dilemma: "Bros before [girlfriends]." But there might be some deeper reasoning behind that kind of motto too.

Basically two values are on the table: loyalty to a friend and the chance to explore a romantic relationship with someone (because she's not definitely going to say yes, right?). The dilemma-poser doesn't say how close of a friend this is, but assuming that the friendship is even a little valuable to the person, it's probably best to consult the friend about this plan (tactfully).

You never know, the friend could be fine with the whole arrangement and you might not have to choose at all between the friend and the possibility of a new girlfriend. (If he thinks you're sneaking around behind his back, it's unlikely to end so well.) If he is uncomfortable with you asking the woman out, then you have a much tougher choice. Unless the dilemma-poser feels some kind of insatiable attraction to the woman he/she wants to ask out, probably better to maintain the friendship and look elsewhere.

-Adam Potthast, PhD, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Park University

In my opinion, dating a friend's ex-girlfriend after they have been broken up for a while is acceptable as long as your friend knows it is going on. Following Aristotle's virtue ethics, you should be honest with your friend that you like the girl and she likes you, but you don't have to tell your friend everything about the situation for him to understand what's going on. If he truly is uncomfortable with it and he tells you, then you have to decide if risking your friendship is worth asking her out, but chances are if they were having issues anyway, your friend will tell you to go for it because it didn't work between them anyway.

-Proponent of an Honest Mean

I don't think you should ask her out at all. If you are with her, it will cause pain for your friend. I know from personal experience. When I broke up with a girl and my friend went out with her, our friendship ended. He had been a really close friend and seeing him with my ex-girlfriend and knowing they were together was very difficult for me. I suggest you leave her alone and find someone else. According to utilitarianism, the best thing to do in this situation is to find someone else, because then everyone has the potential to be happy in contrast to you dating your friend's ex and your friend likely being very upset.

-Kdog

I think you should talk to your friend and base your action on what he says. This is the moral thing to do according to Kantian ethics because you are respecting your friend's dignity as a rational being by asking if it's OK with him if you date his ex-girlfriend. If you don't ask him and he isn't OK with it, then you are not respecting him as a human being and are going behind his back.

According to virtue ethics, talking to your friend would also be morally sound. Being friends with someone requires you to be honest with them as a part of your telos, or purpose, as a friend. Talking to your friend about the situation would be virtuous because you are also finding the middle ground between not asking at all and going behind your friend's back to ask his ex-girlfriend out. Finding and fulfilling the middle ground helps us determine virtuous action, which ultimately creates the most happiness. And true, pure happiness is what virtue ethics is all about.

-Chris Asmussen

Go for the rebound. Assuming that your friend hadn't been dating the girl for an extremely long time, you've got the green light. If they had been having problems for a while, and especially if your friend initiated the breakup, it looks like you are in the clear. Take this simple equation to help you verify whether or not asking your friend's ex is appropriate ethically:

If \( \frac{(Tb/Td)(Ag)}{H} - 10Pf > 50 \), ask her out.

\( Tb = \) Time broken up
\( Td = \) Time couple dated
\( Ag = \) Hotness (1-10)
\( H = \) Coolness (1-10)
Pf=How mad your friend will be on a scale of 1 to 10

It's that simple, man. This equation follows utilitarian values: it weighs your happiness against the potential hurt your friend will endure.
--Matt Mischo

After reviewing the formula by my classmate, Matt Mischo, I added my own alterations to the cost benefit analysis that I find is required in determining when and if it is appropriate to date a friend's ex:

\[(Tb/Td)(Ag-Pf) > 20\]

Ag= Hc
Pf = x/c
Tb = Time broken up
Td= Time couple dated

If results are greater than 20, it's OK to ask your friend's ex out.
-Brendan Lyle

**Dilemma**

I have a very serious mental illness and would like to be open about it, but I am not sure how soon to reveal it to people or to whom I should be open about it. It is well-maintained and most people don't even know I have a problem until they either see me taking medicine or I tell them about it. One day, I would like to educate the world about it, but most people already have misconceptions about the illness and make jokes about it. How do I handle this without overexposing myself?
--Weighing Education and Exposure

We would love to know what you think Weighing Education and Exposure should do and the reasons that make you think so.

Do you have an ethical dilemma in your personal, academic, or professional life? You don't have to figure it out on your own. Send it in and see what wisdom others have to offer.