Morals for your story

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**Dilemma**
My friend continuously talks to me about problems with her mom. My mom died of cancer when I was younger and it makes me very uncomfortable to hear her complain about her mother. Should I continue listening to her talk about her issues while putting myself through stress or tell her to talk to someone else about it?
--Listener Under Stress

**Responses**

Although I cannot relate directly to your situation, I have a friend who died of cancer a few years ago, and I understand that it is hard to hear someone complain about a person in his or her life who reminds you of someone you lost in yours. In my opinion, you should explain your feelings to your friend. Be honest and open about it; tell your friend that even though you want to help her with her problems, it makes you uncomfortable in this situation because you cannot relate to her and even possibly envy her for the relationship she has with her mom. If you are honest and make your friend understand your side of the story, chances are she will realize that she should talk to someone else about her problems with her mom without you even having to ask.
--Empathinator

I think the reasonable thing to do is to inform your friend that you lost your mother. As a result, your friend may come to appreciate her mother more and you will feel less awkward when the topic is brought up. In a utilitarian sense, this would maximize happiness by relieving your stress and helping your friend realize how fortunate she is to have her mother in her life.
--Andrew Pierce

I feel that the best thing to do in your situation would be to tell your friend that listening to her complain about her mother is stressful to you. This would be the right thing to do for two reasons. First of all, it’s not fair to you to be getting stressed every time you talk to your friend. Secondly, it isn’t honest to pretend like everything is okay when it isn’t. Both of these reasons can be viewed from two different ethical views.

The first reason, that it’s not fair to you to listen to your friend complain about her mom, aligns with utilitarianism in a minimal form. This is because you are decreasing your happiness by not saying anything, and if you say something to your friend about how you are affected by having lost your mom, your happiness will likely increase. Additionally, your friend’s happiness could increase if she understands you better and feels like you trust her enough to confide in her.

The second reason, that it’s not honest to pretend you’re fine when you aren’t, represents a value of Kantian ethics. This is because honesty is of supreme importance in Kantian ethics, and by not telling your friend how you feel you are, in essence, lying to her. The best thing to do is to tell your friend how you feel. This is the morally right thing to do by both utilitarian and Kantian ethical views.
--Nathan Fisk