

# Painful Secrets

**Values:** Courage, Solidarity, Trust, Justice.

**Key Skills:** Know how to react to attacks on physical or psychological integrity; Know how to measure the consequences of a secret; Be able to trust and ask for help.

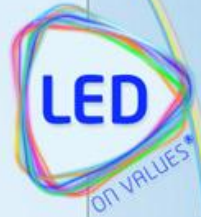
**Ethical Dilemmas:** Short term vs. Long term; Revenge vs. Justice, Justice vs. Fear; Truth vs. Loyalty



## Relevance for the ethics of sexuality

The ethics of sexuality tells us that fear and shame sometimes make us be silent, but nobody has the right to undermine our physical or psychological integrity. And if that happens, as much fear we might have, we must tell and rely for help.

The ethics of sexuality implies that when a secret endangers life, we don't have to keep it. Even if who requested the secret is close, we are afraid that may become angry, that after will offend us and it is hard to suffer the consequences, we must realize that these are always smaller than those involved in the secret.







## Narrative

John and Thomas are cousins and close friends, but go to different schools and see each other only on weekends. John is small for his age; his mother says he doesn't eat enough spinach, because the arms are very narrow, without any muscle. John does not like to play football and prefers to read during break times, and the other school kids make a lot of fun of him. Thomas plays football a lot and always gets into fights, but he gets along very well with John, because John always knows the answers to everything and tells him fantastic stories.

On Sunday they met at their uncle's home, Thomas realized that John was limping and during lunch he just stared at the plate. When the two were alone he asked him what had happened, John said:

Will you swear, really swear you won't tell anyone?







## Narrative

Thomas shrugged and replied, "I swear, but tell me what is it?"

- I told my parents that I had fallen off the school stairs, but the truth is that some bastards from the 5th grade gave me a beating.

And John started crying; huge tears fell down his face.

Thomas was so angry, that even lightnings flashed in his eyes:

- Those ... You can't stay silent, you have to tell your parents, your teacher...

- I can't, I can't Thomas, then they will call me a whiner and it will be worse...

- So I will tell our elder cousins and we'll wait for them to beat them too...

John gave a cry:

- Are you crazy Thomas? You swore you wouldn't say anything. That's why I told you. If you go there, they will kill me. If they don't kill me in the meantime, he sobbed.







## Dilemmas' Exploration

### Truth vs. Loyalty

Thomas thinks he should tell the truth to John's parents and teacher or to the elder cousins about the real reason he's limping. But John asked him for secret and they were always loyal to each other. If Thomas doesn't tell, John may continue to suffer physical attacks, but if he tells he will lose his cousin trust. Should Thomas be loyal to the promised, or must the truth be above everything?







## Dilemmas' Exploration

### Justice Vs. Fear

John knows that what his colleagues of the 5th grade have done is unfair and that violence against a person is crime. Therefore he feels that they should be punished for the bad they have done to him, either by complaining to the school or asking his cousins to beat them up.

On the other hand, he is afraid that things will get worse and that others will do more harm, because he complained.

Should John go the way of justice and deal with his fear, trusting in the people who want to help? Or is it better to let the situation go and not complain to anyone?







## Dilemmas' Exploration

### Revenge Vs Justice

If the elder cousins wait for the 5th grade boys and beat them up, Thomas and John will feel that they got what they deserved.

But will it be equally correct? Wouldn't this vengeance lead to more conflicts between groups of students?

But to have justice instead of this revenge, John would have to tell the adults and the cousins wouldn't be able to help much, maybe just try to protect him.







## Dilemmas' Exploration

### Short Term vs. Long Term

John may be upset now if Thomas tells the adults what happened, and even the colleagues who beat him may make more threats because he complained to others. But if John does get the colleagues to be punished, he will feel that justice was done and they didn't leave unpunished for the bad things they have done to him. At a time then, after things calm down, maybe he'll understand better why Thomas told an adult and forgives the apparent disloyalty.







## Scenarios

**Solution 1** - Thomas convinces his cousin to tell his parents.

**Solution 2** - Thomas respects his cousin's request and tells no one.

**Solution 3** - Thomas tells the elder cousins and they beat John's colleagues.







## Scenarios

### **Thomas convinces his cousin to tell his parents.**

Thomas is mad with what is happening to John. He has a strong desire to go give them a beating. But he calms down and asks his cousin to talk to his parents. But he refuses. Thomas explains that if he speaks to his parents they could talk to the teachers to try to resolve the situation and find a way to protect him. He also told him that if he doesn't say anything, they will continue to beat him and put him in danger, and he does not deserve to suffer and shouldn't be afraid. Talking with his parents can make things better and this is the first step.

But John is still afraid. Thomas decides to go to the Internet with his cousin and shows him a few sites about the subject. John realizes how serious the situation is and that he shouldn't be afraid to talk to his parents. John asks Thomas to be with him when he speaks to his parents. John tells his parents, who felt terribly sorry for their son and they gave him courage and support to never hide these situations. They promised him they would talk to the school teachers and solve the situation.

The colleagues were object of a disciplinary action and the teachers became more attentive to John, so that this wouldn't happen again. Also the parents were more attentive to the need for John to have more confidence in himself and to defend himself better. So John was enrolled in karate lessons.



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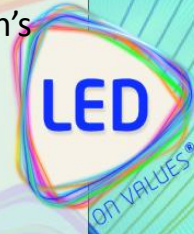
## Scenarios

### **Thomas respects his cousin's request and tells no one.**

With the insistence of his cousin not to tell anyone, Thomas decides to respect John's request, though he doesn't agree. He still tries to convince his cousin to tell his parents or teachers, but doesn't succeed.

The following week, Thomas parents inform him that John is in the hospital with a broken arm because of a new fall at school. Thomas suspects that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade colleagues were responsible and feels immense remorse for not telling an adult what was happening with his cousin at school.

Thomas goes visiting John at the hospital and confirms that it was the 5<sup>th</sup> grade colleagues. The cousin tells him that they shouldn't have kept the secret and that John had to tell his parents. With difficulty, John tells them, who were outraged when they learned about the situation and at the same time sad because John didn't tell them sooner, feeling that he did not trust them. In the end, John was sorry for not telling earlier. He could have avoided his parents' pain, and he wouldn't be at this moment in the hospital in pain. .



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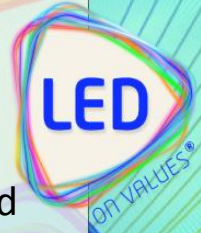
## Scenarios

### **Thomas tells the elder cousins and they beat John's colleagues.**

Tom tells the elder cousins what had happened to John at school. They decide to wait at the school gate for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys. They followed them and when they were in a place with few people, grabbed them and gave a mighty beating. They warned them not to meddle more with John and if they did, they would come back again and it would be worse.

When John knew what happened he became extremely worried and afraid to go to school the other day, because of the reprisals. And he was also hurt because Thomas didn't keep his secret.

Because John refused to go to school, Thomas and John's parents found out about the fight outside the school and the reason behind it. They were upset and sad because their children did not act the right way to solve the problem. Despite feeling that he did well to defend his cousin, Thomas was upset for having caused so much confusion.



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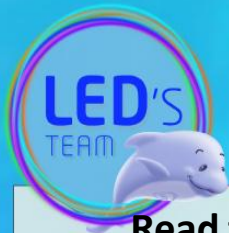




**Do we have a better solution  
for this dilemma?**







**Read the story with your parents or guardian and ask them to:**

1. Find in the history two correct things but which are in conflict. Take note.

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Then check if it is one of the dilemmas you've worked at school with the teacher.

2. If it is one of those, ask how would they resolve this dilemma. Write down the solution to show your teacher and classmates. If it is a new dilemma, ask them to explain it. Write it done so that you can show your teacher and classmates.

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