

"Need to talk ASAP. Does it ever end?"

A true story with names changed to protect the guilty.

This happened in March 2010.



Jess got up to get something off of Allison's desk and couldn't believe her eyes. There scratched into the margins of a handout from class were the words, "Jess is SO annoying! I can't wait to get this over with." In someone else's handwriting right beneath it were the words, "True that!"

A chill shot through her veins... a chill, or was that fire?

She picked up the paper, turned to Allison and confronted her, "What is this?"

Allison realizing she was busted, immediately started stumbling over her words, "Oh, it's... I was just kidding... I mean... uh... I really have to get to class now. Can we talk about this later?"

"No," said Jess. "You've got to be kidding me. Give me an F__'n break. What is this, Middle School?"

That was the problem. It wasn't Middle School. It wasn't even High School.

It was her Senior year of college, one month shy of graduation at one of the elite universities in this country. She was 22 years old, as was Allison and the other girls in the group who were in on their gossip circle.

She sent me a text right away: "Need to talk asap. Does it ever end?"

When I called her a few hours later, she was confused, discouraged and livid.

"I know you are going to tell me I shouldn't make it about me," said said through her tears, "but it is just so hurtful I thought we were all friends and getting along fine. Now I just feel stupid. I don't even know what I am doing that makes them hate me."

These girls were all assigned to work together on a senior project that was requisite for graduation. With just a month to go until graduation, it was too late to find another group so things were all the more awkward as she would still have to face these girls for many more hours of group work.

"What should I do? Should I confront them all? Should I wait and see if they come to me? What if they never do? I hate this stuff. I thought it would be over in Middle School, then I thought it would be over by High School, then I thought it would be over by college. Does it ever end?"

This conversation and this scenario are commonplace in my practice. What I say and how I handle these things with my clients though, is not so commonplace.

My clients like Jess whom I'd Mentored since she was 16, know that I don't coddle them, nor do I patronize them with comments about how that must feel or give them a place to vent get it off their chests. They can find a friend or a therapist to do that for them.

No, they actually hire me to do something else for them:

To help them grow up. To help them grow into the rare kind of person where these kinds of things no longer can effect them. To help them handle these things with the maturity that builds character that leads to becoming a confident, centered, empowered adult.

I also understand implicitly that ideas and advice are only of value when a person becomes the person who will actually implement the advice. Most people know what to do, but actually being a person who will do it even when it isn't easy, is something else entirely. My goal is to grow my clients into the select ones who will.

"Think about what we've talked about before," I replied. "There are only two circumstances where I think it is worth responding and speaking up. #1: If the person matters enough to you. #2: If the issue matters enough to you and therefore not speaking up means by your silence, you condone what people are promoting."

After a long conversation that included what she could actually say to handle this in a mature and productive way, Jess realized that neither these people, nor the issue mattered enough to her to take it any further. They would have to go on being with her feeling stupid for what they've done, and she'd have to keep working with them realizing they didn't like her and she didn't like them. Life's often like that.

A week later when we spoke for a follow-up, she said:

"The hardest part is knowing how easy it would be to take a cheap shot at them, but not doing it. My pride gets fired up and I have these moments of rage. Then I think about what you said about how every moment spent on people and issues that aren't worth it is a moment I can never get back... and it leads me to feeling really inspired and motivated to just go out and really make something of my life. People behaving like them may never end, but me behaving like them just did. It feels amazing... oh and did I tell you about this guy I met at my internship...?"

To learn more about my Evolution Mentoring services and how I can offer guidance like this for your teen, visit my website and call me to schedule a FREE consultation. I look forward to speaking with you.

www.Leiken.com Jeff@Leiken.com 415.441.8218

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