

In a Pickle

Deborah and Joe have been playing pickleball together since they were kids. It used to be a fair competition between the two, but now Deborah's skills far surpass Joe's. Deborah still likes Joe's company, but she feels ready to face tougher opponents. Penelope and Patricia have always been much better players than both Deborah and Joe. Joe often complains about how condescending they act when they see Joe miss a ball or trip on the court.

Patricia is sick, so Deborah receives an invite to play with Penelope on Friday, the same day that she usually plays with Joe. Deborah knows this is her chance to finally test her skills against better competition, but she doesn't want to skip out on Joe. She decides that she can play with both on different days. Since she is less comfortable with Penelope, she explains her situation to Joe and asks if he would play on Thursday instead. Joe is appalled that Deborah would even think about playing with one of the "Pickle Princesses" who bully him, especially on their designated day, so he gives her an ultimatum: if she plays with Penelope, Joe will never play with her again. Deborah tries to reason with him, but Joe won't have it. It's him or Penelope.

Deborah would rather keep Joe as a friend and playing partner than take the chance to play with Penelope, but after his response, she feels hurt, and she is no longer sure whether Joe has her best interests at heart. She thinks he is being selfish, and she is worried that she might never get the chance to play someone of her level if he continues to act like this. On the other hand, she knows Patricia will probably be healthy by next week, so she would be throwing away her lifetime friend for one outing of pickleball. Yet, she knows in the back of her head that Joe will eventually get over it because their friendship is stronger than Penelope's forehand, but she can't be sure. Friday morning comes and Deborah is still not sure what to do. She wants to be a good friend, but she doesn't think Joe is being fair.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does Deborah owe Joe anything in this case? What obligations come with friendship?
2. Does Joe have a right to be angry? Is he being a bad friend?
3. Is it ethical for Deborah to abandon a friend for her own personal development?

