

## Case 3: Old Friends

### Background:

Joan is a counselor in an outpatient program where she runs a family education group for parents whose children are in treatment for substance abuse problems. She is the *only* staff person who runs this group, and this is the *only* group available to families in the area. While doing an initial assessment with a couple, she and the father, Jim, realize that they attended the same high school sixteen years ago. Since they did not socialize together or live in the same neighborhood, Joan does not see this as a problem, but at the end of the session, she asks Jim how he feels about being a member of her group. Jim indicates he is glad that she will be leading the group since there will be a "familiar face." Jim and his wife begin attending the group but after a few weeks, Joan notices that Jim is coming alone.

### The Dilemma:

After tonight's group, Jim asks if he can speak to Joan alone. Although it is late and it means she and Jim will be the only ones left in the building, Joan feels obligated to meet with him. She is also curious about the wife's absences. Jim begins by telling her that his wife has said she will no longer attend the groups because Jim told her he is attracted to Joan. He reveals that he had a crush on Joan when they were in high school but was always too shy to speak to her. He doesn't know what to do now as he thinks it is important for his wife to attend this group but he can't help how he feels about Joan. He reaches over and takes Joan's hand.

### The Questions:

1. If you were Joan, what would you do at this point?
2. What Ethical Codes are implicated in this case?
3. What steps could she have taken to prevent this interaction with Jim?
4. Are you making a relativistic, utilitarian, or rights-based argument?