



Read this:

Your friend and teammate says that they need to tell you something, but you need to promise to keep it a secret. You say, “ok,” and your friend tells you that something bad happened to them during a travel meet a few weekends ago. They tell you that one of the team chaperones was making inappropriate and sexual jokes, and once when they were alone, the chaperone tried to touch and kiss your friend. Your friend said that they “dealt with it” and that you shouldn’t say anything to anyone.

What do you do?

>Safe Sport says: It’s hard to know what “dealt with it” really means, and it’s important to make sure that your friend gets the help that they need. Say, “Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me. I know you asked me to keep this a secret, but I need to tell my parent (or coach or other trusted adult).” Even though your friend said that they dealt with the situation, talk with an adult you trust about the situation.

But you promised to keep it a secret. What now?

>Safe Sport says: Your friend trusted you with this information, and it’s important to honor that by not sharing it with other teammates as gossip. HOWEVER, it is important to talk to a trusted adult to get your friend the help and support that they need and make sure that something like this doesn’t happen again. Your friend might be upset in the short-term, but speaking up is the right thing to do.

What boundaries are involved in this situation?

>Safe Sport says: Emotional and behavioral. Emotional boundaries are what you feel comfortable sharing with another person and how close you feel to them. Behavioral boundaries are the actions that you’re comfortable with. If your friend was asking you to keep a secret from your parents, that might go against your behavioral boundary.

What are the two things you should do if someone is trying to cross your boundaries?

>Safe Sport says: First, do your best to remove yourself from the situation. Walk away, change the subject, or get someone else’s attention to make the person stop. Second, go tell someone you trust—and keep telling until someone steps in to help you.

What kinds of secrets are okay to keep?

*>Safe Sport says: Some secrets are okay to keep. These are things like a surprise birthday party where everything is meant to be revealed in a fun and inclusive way. Sometimes our friends and family members tell us things that they don’t want us to gossip about, and it’s important to respect their privacy and not blab about it. But if it is a secret about someone being harmed, made to feel uncomfortable, or in danger, **please tell an adult you trust.** These kinds of secrets can be dangerous, and your friend might need help. In these cases, it’s absolutely okay to speak up.*

Wrap It Up:

When it comes to secrets, there’s a difference between getting help and gossiping. Think about who you can tell something like this scenario who can help you get help for your friend.

***For Coaches:** Team chaperones must become USA Swimming non-athlete members and be subject to a background check and the Athlete Protection Training. Brief your chaperons on the team travel policy and team code of conduct before a trip. For these and more resources, visit www.usaswimming.org/toolkit or contact Safe Sport at (719) 866-4578 or safesport@usaswimming.org.