

Relationship Summary

Friends: Liz Rubino (*pronouns: she/her/hers*) and Bianca Rowls (*pronouns: she/her/hers*)

Overview: Liz and Bianca are first-year students at Texas A&M who have been best friends since high school. They are inseparable and spend most of their time together during the semesters and over the summer. However, after Liz receives an internship opportunity which changes her summer plans, it soon becomes clear that Bianca struggles between trying to control aspects of her friendship with Liz while also apologizing for her behavior. Guilt, poor communication, and jealousy characterize this relationship until Liz finally decides it would be best to take some time apart.

Starter Card

Liz Rubino (*pronouns: she, they*)

Meet Liz. She considers herself to be the loudest and proudest member of the Fighting Texas Aggie Class of 2027. She came to A&M with her best friend Bianca, and they are both excited to take on college together! Liz is a business major and takes her education very seriously. As soon as she arrived at A&M, she quickly joined clubs in her major, started a study group with classmates and has been on the hunt for the perfect summer internship. Liz recently applied for her dream program but is nervous to tell Bianca, as it would mean living out of state for the summer. The two of them have spent every summer together since they were kids.

Bianca Rowls (*pronouns: she, her, hers*)

Meet Bianca. She also considers herself to be the loudest and proudest member of the Fighting Texas Aggie Class of 2027. Bianca hasn't always taken school as seriously as Liz, but she is committed to doing better in college. Her first year has been stressful and she is really looking forward to spending the summer working and relaxing with her best friend, Liz. Lately when she brings up summer plans, Liz avoids the subject. She is confused and worried their friendship may be fading.

Go to Together Card #1

Together Card #1

Bianca and Liz are hanging out in Bianca's dorm.

Bianca: *"Hey, I really want to start making some plans for this summer! Pool trips, movie nights, maybe even a road trip... what are you thinking?"*

Liz: *"I just don't want to have anything set in stone yet. I mean, we still have plenty of time left in the semester and who knows, you might end up with other..."*

Bianca interrupts Liz: *"Liz we have spent every summer together since we were kids. There's no way I am going to blow you off for something else. Only a terrible friend would throw away a tradition like that... now sorry, what were you saying?"¹*

Liz: *"Just that I have study session I have to get to. I'll see you later."*

Liz leaves feeling even more nervous about her internship plans. Liz gets back to her dorm and checks her email and sees a new message. It's about the internship and even better, it's an acceptance! But now, Liz must decide how to break the news to Bianca.

If you want Liz to tell Bianca now, go to Friend Card #1
If you want Liz to wait to tell Bianca, go to Friend Card #2

¹ This is an example of **belittling** and **guilting**.

Within this dialogue, Bianca suggests that Liz is indeed a terrible friend for even bringing up the possibility of summer plans changing. Bianca's willingness to interrupt Liz shows a lack of respect for Liz's perspective, despite the fact that Bianca openly asked "what are you thinking?". Guilt also plays a role in Bianca's approach, when she makes Liz feel like a bad friend or person for "throwing away tradition."

Friend Card #1:

Liz: *"I'm so excited I got this internship. I must tell Bianca!"* Liz thinks to herself, *"I know Bianca had her heart set on us spending the summer together but once she sees what a great opportunity this is, she will totally come around."* Liz texts Bianca to see if she will come over later.



Bianca arrives at Liz's apartment, and Liz shares her internship acceptance.

Liz: *"I know it's not our usual plan, but I'll still have some time this summer with you - just not the whole break. It's a really big deal for my major and I think it'll benefit me a lot... what do you think??"*

Bianca: *"Honestly Liz, I can't believe you would apply to something like this and not even tell me!"*

Go to Communication Card #1

Friend Card #2:

Liz: *"I'm so excited I got the internship. I must tell Bianca!"*

Liz pauses and thinks: *"I don't know if Bianca is going to take this well after the comment she made tonight. I'm going to keep this to myself for a day or two until she calms down. Then I'll talk to her."*

The next morning, Bianca sends Liz a text. Liz opens it.



When Bianca arrives at Liz's apartment, Liz is in the bathroom getting ready. She looks around and sees Liz's laptop open to the acceptance letter email. Bianca, being nosy, looks at it and is instantly angry.

Liz: *"Hey Bianca! You ready to go?"*

Bianca, holding her laptop: *"Yeah but what the heck is this? You applied to some summer internship and didn't even tell me?! That's messed up, Liz!"*

Go to Communication Card #1

Communication Card #1

Bianca: *"I can't believe our summer plans mean so little to you, that you would just throw them away for some dumb internship."*

Liz: *"It's not a dumb internship, this is important to me and honestly, I thought you would be happy for me."*

Bianca: *"You don't even need stuff like this until you're a junior or senior, Liz. You are such an idiot! Why would I be happy about you blowing me off and lying to me? This is ridiculous!"*

Liz: *"I am not an idiot! And I didn't lie to you! I never made plans for this summer, I just didn't tell you I applied because I was waiting to see if I'd even get it but now that I have, I am going, and I really hope you can understand."*

Bianca: *"I definitely don't understand, and I'm not going to sit here and listen to this anymore. Don't even talk to me right now, Liz!"* Bianca leaves, slamming the door as she exits.²

Liz thinks to herself: *I'm shocked Bianca would get so mad at me. I want to fix this, but I don't know what to do....*

The rest of the day goes by with no communication between the two friends.

If you want Liz to reach out to Bianca, go to Friend Card #3

If you want Liz to wait for Bianca to reach out, go to Friend Card #4

Friend Card #3:

² This is an example of **belittling** and **guilting**.

Bianca makes the situation entirely about her, without considering the motivations and benefits for Liz to pursue the internship. There is no equitable compromise. Bianca's initial response uses guilting to frame Liz as inconsiderate of her feelings. Bianca's initial response and entire dialogue also belittles Liz as a person as well as a candidate for the internship. The language Bianca uses during to express her disagreement is verbally abusive and accusatory.

Liz feels badly about the fight with Bianca and she doesn't want to be angry with her best friend. She decides to reach out to explain how the entire situation has made her feel.

Liz sends Bianca a text:



Bianca is happy Liz has finally come to her senses and wants to apologize!

Liz goes over to Bianca's and begins to explain her side of the story: *"I didn't lie to you, Bianca. I just didn't tell you the entire truth because honestly, you said so many things that were out of line and I didn't know how you were going to react."*

Bianca, thinking Liz was coming over to apologize to her, quickly gets defensive when accused of having done something wrong.

Bianca: *"I think my reaction was perfectly valid given the situation. You know how I feel about people lying to me. You've been letting me go on, trying to make plans for the summer and didn't say anything! I know we hadn't made anything official, but we always spend our summers together and I didn't think that would change once we got to college. I guess I was wrong."*³

Liz: *"It's not like I'm blowing you off for just anything. This is a great opportunity for me to learn more and network in my major!"*

Go to Communication Card #2

Friend Card #4:

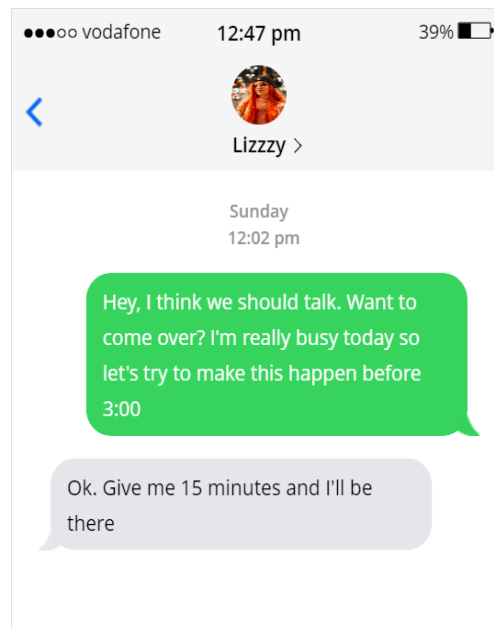
³ This is an example of **deflecting responsibility** and **guilting**.

Liz attempts to take accountability for her actions and have a productive conversation with Bianca. However, Bianca does not provide Liz with the same level of reflection about the disagreement or desire to find resolve. Instead, Bianca immediately defends herself as being right and Liz as being wrong. There is an undertone to Bianca's defensive remark that she doesn't wish to find equitable compromise, but just make Liz feel bad about herself, which is emotionally abusive.

Liz feels badly about the fight with Bianca. Thinking about some of the comments Bianca made, Liz feels increasingly uneasy about their friendship. Liz decides it's better to wait a few days to talk to Bianca. Maybe it will give Bianca some time to calm down.

After a few days though, Bianca has become even more upset that Liz never reached out to apologize. Bianca is ready to talk to Liz: she wants to make sure that Liz knows her actions were not okay and that she isn't going to accept that behavior.

Bianca sends Liz a text:



Liz sees the text and is happy Bianca is ready to put the fight behind them. She goes over to Bianca's and the two sit down to talk it out.

Bianca: *"I really wish I didn't have to be the one to reach out. After all the things you put me through, I figured I needed to be the bigger person and save our friendship. Do you not care about me at all, Liz?"*

Liz jumps in: *"Hold on! You stormed out of my apartment and said you didn't want to talk to me. Of course, I'm going to respect your space and let you come talk to me when you're ready. And I don't think we need to save our friendship. Sure, we have both done some things to upset each other but is it really that deep?"*

Bianca: *"YOU have done things to upset ME!" Anything that I have said or done is totally justifiable given the fact that you have been lying to me, and then didn't even care enough to try to reach out after you knew how upset I was! I mean, come on Liz what is your deal?"*⁴

⁴ This is an example of **deflecting responsibility**, **guilting**, and **belittling**.

Liz made the decision to wait a few days to contact Bianca, since it seemed like Bianca wanted some time apart. Bianca reaches out to Liz, but does so under the unhealthy pretense of making Liz feel bad about herself and her commitment to their friendship. Liz is put on the defense by the comment and while she acknowledges her respect for Bianca's boundaries, she also belittles Bianca with ending her comment with "is it really that deep?", which suggests that their friendship is not important. Liz partially deflects responsibility for her actions in this dialogue,

Go to Communication Card #2

Communication Card #2:

while Bianca completely deflects responsibility for what she has said to Liz, how she has made Liz feel about herself, and for how their unhealthy communication patterns are impacting the friendship.

Liz: *"Look, I'm sorry that I upset you, but you have said some very ugly things to me and that's not okay. I get that you are upset but I would never talk to you like that."*

Bianca: *"I didn't even say anything! Come on Liz, you are not going to turn this around on me. I am not the one who did something wrong here. However, if you are willing to apologize and forget about this silly little internship, I might be able to forgive you."*

Liz: *"I'm taking the internship, and if you can't support me with that then I don't have anything else to say to you!"*

Bianca: *"If that's the way you feel Liz, then maybe we just shouldn't be friends anymore. You're putting yourself before me, like you think you're better than me or something."*

Liz: *"That's not true, Bianca. But it doesn't matter what I say – you always make it about you. If you want to really talk with me about things, I'm open to it. I care about you, but I think it's better we spend some time apart. Maybe when I get back, we can meet up or something"*

Bianca: *"FINE, whatever Liz! I don't know why you're even still talking. Just go already!"*

Liz leaves. She feels bad about how this is ending, because she cares about Bianca and wants to continue their friendship. But Liz also wants to focus on things that she's really excited about and would like to have people in her life who encourage and support her goals. Liz will connect with Bianca again, but she needs some space. If they are meant to be really good friends, then there's always room for that relationship in the future.⁵

Go to Conclusion Card

Conclusion Card:

⁵ This is an example of **deflecting responsibility** and **guilting**.

Bianca refuses to acknowledge that in previous parts of this disagreement or conflict, she has suggested that Liz is a terrible person and explicitly referred to her as "stupid". The remainder of the dialogue includes Bianca using guilt to make Liz feel entirely responsible for the fact that their friendship might be coming to a close. Liz attempts to use healthy communication strategies here, but also mirrors a few of Bianca's unhealthy communication strategies when put on the defense: trying to shut down the conversation, and leaving without any type of affirmation or next step (e.g. "Okay, I will go. I do care about you, even though you may not want to hear it right now. Take care of yourself. I will reach out soon.")

It has been a few months since Liz and Bianca's fight, and a lot has changed. Liz accepted her internship offer and has spent the summer learning and growing in her major. She has made some new friends while working, and it has helped her realize that her friendship with Bianca is no longer something she wants to put energy into. Bianca firmly believes she did nothing wrong, and still uses that to justify why she and Liz aren't speaking. Liz has spent her summer getting close with other friends who make her feel confident, and has decided not to reach out to Bianca until she genuinely apologizes and takes accountability for how she made her feel.

End of Scenario

Your scenario depicted an unhealthy relationship. The evidence-based characteristics were:

- 1. Belittling:** When someone does and says things to make you feel bad about yourself. This includes name-calling, making rude remarks about people you're close with, or criticizing you.
- 2. Guilting:** When someone makes you feel responsible for their actions or makes you feel like it's your job to keep them happy.
- 3. Deflecting Responsibility:** When someone repeatedly makes excuses for their unhealthy behavior. They may blame you or other people for their own actions.

Where did each of these characteristics present in the path you took through the scenario? There might be one example or multiple examples of each characteristic.