UPPER-INTERMEDIATE (B2/C1)

Lesson on AITA Conflicts

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WARM-UP

1) Do you think you are an easy person to get along with? Why or why not?
2) When was the last time you had an argument with a family member or friend?
3) Have you ever tried to get advice in an online forum?

READING PASSAGE

Background: AITA (Am I the A**hole?) is a Reddit forum where people ask others to judge if their actions were appropriate or not. Below are some summaries of interesting AITA posts.

Task: Read and discuss each story. Assess if the OP (original poster) is **YTA** (You're The A**hole), **NTA** (Not The A**hole), **NAH** (No A**holes Here), **ESH** (Everyone Sucks Here) or **INFO** (Not enough information).

1. The Pet: I'm 34, and I've been with my **fiancé**, Tim, for a couple of years. He recently moved in with his 9-year-old daughter, Emily, who has strong **allergies** to dogs. The problem is, I have a 7-year-old golden retriever, Max, who's been my close friend through everything. Tim knew about Max from the start, but now that we're living together, he's demanding that I get rid of my dog for Emily's safety.

I suggested keeping Max out of Emily's room, deep cleaning, using air purifiers, or even keeping Max here part-time—but Tim **shot down** every idea. He says I need to "put Emily first." Because I'm not willing to give up Max, he says that I'm selfish and not ready to be a stepmom. To me, Max is family. I can't imagine **abandoning** him. Am I wrong for **standing my ground**?[1]

2. The Key: I should start by saying my mother-in-law is very **nosy**. My husband (37m) and I (34f) just bought a new house and she kept pushing us for a spare key "for emergencies." The thing is, she had an "emergency" key to our old apartment and used it to walk in on us twice while we were having sex. I couldn't trust her, so I gave her a fake key to our new place.

Then at Christmas dinner, she **criticized** me in front of everyone because I had given her a "fake key". When I asked how she knew it was fake, she admitted she'd tried to let herself in when we weren't home (without an emergency). I reminded her she'd promised only to use it if necessary. She turned red and went into the kitchen and had a **meltdown**. The rest of dinner was **awkward**. My husband says I ruined Christmas and demands that I apologize to her. Seriously, AITA?[2]

3. Getting Fired: I'm a high schooler with a weekend job at a coffee shop. Customers get super angry at me over nothing. So my coworker James (the owner's son) thought up a plan. One day, a guy was shouting at me about his coffee not being hot enough, so James comes in and "fired" me **on the spot**, and I played along, pretending to be shocked and sad. The guy immediately changed his mind, apologizing and saying it wasn't a big deal. James refuses, insisting "We pride ourselves on the best customer service."

We've done this a couple times now and it usually results in the customer apologizing. Honestly it's a pretty satisfying **prank**. I told my friends about it, but some said it's **cruel**. AITA for letting people think they got me fired?[3]

COMPREHENSION & FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1) **Recall & Retell:** Summarize each story in your own words: The Pet, The Key, and Getting Fired.
2) What suggestions did the OP (original poster) make to Tim to solve the problem?

3) How could the first story best be solved?
4) Some people are a certain way (e.g. nervous, loud, nosy) by nature. Do you think the mother law in the second story can learn to respect people's boundaries?
5) Generally speaking, why do people often complain about their "in-laws"?
6) In the third story, why do you think customers apologized after James joined the conversation?
7) Why might the OP's friends think that the prank is cruel?

VOCABULARY Match the **bold** words in the passage with their meanings below.

1)	fiancé (n)	a)	uncomfortable or embarrassing
2)	allergy (n)	b)	a joke or trick played on someone, often for fun
3)	to shoot sth down	c)	being too interested in other people's private matters
4)	abandon (v)	d)	to leave something/someone behind and not care for them anymore
5)	stand your ground (idiom)	e)	without any delay; immediately
6)	nosy (adj)	f)	a man someone is engaged to marry
7)	criticize (v)	g)	to say something negative about someone's behavior, work, etc.
8)	meltdown (n)	h)	describing something that causes pain or suffering on purpose
9)	awkward (adj)	i)	a medical condition where certain things, e.g. food, cause a bad reaction in the body
10)	on the spot (idiom)	j)	to refuse to change your position, even when others disagree
11)	prank (n)	k)	a situation where someone becomes very upset or loses control
12)	cruel (adj)	l)	to reject an idea/suggestion completely

Pronunciation: Pronounce the above phrases with your teacher, stressing the underlined syllable.

PRACTICE **Paraphrase** each question using the word in parentheses. Then ask the questions to your partner.

1) Have you ever seen a stranger completely lose their temper in public? (meltdown)
2) Do you think eating meat is unnecessarily mean? (cruel)
3) Is it important to live with your future husband before getting married? (fiancé)
4) What's one thing that could make dates feel less strange? (awkward)
5) Have you ever had a neighbour or relative who always wanted to know about your personal business? (nosy)
6) Can you come up with a funny joke right now? (on the spot)
7) What's the funniest joke someone has played on another person that you've seen? Did anyone get upset? (prank)
8) Did your parents ever accidentally forget you somewhere when you were a child? (abandon)
9) If you were attacked by a bear, would you run away or hold your position? (stand your ground)

ROLEPLAY (Pick a Role)

Situation: Casey is getting married next month. He has decided to have a child-free wedding.

Casey's Sister: Of course you want to attend your brother's wedding, but you have three kids. Your kids are lovely. You are a single mom. You cannot afford childcare for the night (usually your mom helps with babysitting, but she'll be at the wedding). Convince Casey to let you bring your kids. Tell him that if your children can't go, then you won't go.

Possible expression: You're asking me to choose between being a good mom and a good sister.

Casey: You want people to enjoy your wedding, so you have decided to ban children. (You especially don't want your sister's kids there; they are always crying and breaking things). Think of reasons to support your argument.

Possible expression: We don't need kids having a meltdown at our wedding.

SPEAKING ACTIVITY: Story-Telling

Option 1: Using some of the vocabulary below, tell your own AITA story and then present it to the class.

Option 2: Create a fictional story using the images *and* the vocabulary below. (Note: it doesn't need to be an AITA story.)

?

Vocabulary

- fiancé (n)
- allergy (n)
- to shoot sth down
- abandon (v)
- stand your ground (idiom)
- nosy (adj)
- criticize (v)
- meltdown (n)
- awkward (adj)
- on the spot (idiom)
- prank (n)
- cruel (adj)

SPEAKING ACTIVITY AITA Rapid-Fire

1) AITA for not buying my 15-year-old child an iPhone for his birthday despite his friends all having them?
2) AITA for not bowing to my girlfriend's Korean grandparents? My girlfriend never bowed when she met my (European) parents.
3) AITA for suing my girlfriend for taking my old car to the scrap yard?
4) AITA for throwing away my boyfriend's university acceptance letter before he could read it? I don't want him to leave me.
5) My don't like my son's girlfriend. Recently, the family had an "ugly Christmas sweater" party. I wore a sweater with his girlfriend's face on it. Now my son is mad, and his girlfriend won't talk to him. AITA?

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Insert a word from today's lesson into the appropriate blank from memory. If you get stuck, the word bank is below.

1) I'm 34, and I've been with my _____, Tim, for a couple of years.
2) … his 9-year-old daughter, Emily, who has strong _____ to dogs.
3) I kept suggesting… but Tim _____ every idea.
4) To me, Max is family. I can't imagine _____ him. Am I wrong for _____?
5) I should start by saying my mother-in-law is very _____.
6) Then at Christmas dinner, she _____ me in front of everyone.
7) She turned red and went into kitchen and had a _____.
8) The rest of dinner was _____.
9) so James comes in and "fired" me _____, and I played along, pretending to shocked…
10) Honestly it's a pretty satisfying _____.
11) I told my friends about it, but some said it's _____.

prank / stand your ground / allergy / cruel / on the spot / fiancé / meltdown / nosy / abandon / shoot sth down / criticize / awkward

FAMOUS QUOTATIONS

- *"Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude." – William James*
- *"Good fences make good neighbors." – Robert Frost*

COLLOCATION REVIEW

Match the beginnings of the collocations with their endings.

1)	golden	a)	through everything
2)	my close friend	b)	over nothing
3)	get rid	c)	purifiers
4)	using air	d)	retriever
5)	spare	e)	key
6)	she turned	f)	red
7)	get angry at me	g)	deal
8)	it wasn't a big	h)	of my dog
9)	We pride	i)	ourselves on the best customer service

FINAL DISCUSSION

1) What are some pros and cons of seeking advice on online forums?
2) Overall, do you think you are a good person? How can you improve?
3) What did you learn from today's lesson?

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ANSWER KEY

Comprehension Questions

1. *…*
2. *Suggestions: Keeping Max out of Emily's room, Deep cleaning, Using air purifiers, Boarding Max part-time*
3. *…*
4. *…*
5. *…*
6. *They likely felt guilty for overreacting after seeing the perceived consequence (the "firing") of their behavior.*
7. *They may believe it's unethical to let customers think they caused someone to lose their job, especially if the customer feels genuinely bad afterward.*

Vocabulary Answer Key

1-f, 2-i, 3-l, 4-d, 5-j, 6-c, 7-g, 8-k, 9-a, 10-e, 11-b, 12-h

Collocation Answer Key

1-d, 2-a, 3-h, 4-c, 5-e, 6-f, 7-b, 8-g, 9-i

[1] https://news.meaww.com/aita-woman-sparks-online-debate-by-refusing-to-rehome-her-dog-for-her-fiances-allergic-daughter?
[2] https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/rrjhmz/aita_for_giving_my_mil_a_fake_copy_of_my_house/
[3] https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/e5k3z2/aita_for_pretending_to_get_fired_when_customers/

SAMPLE