

# AP2 Annotation Guidelines

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## 1.1 Goal of the Project

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The goal of this project is to take anonymous posts from Reddit's AITA (Am I the Asshole?) Thread, and give a definite label as to whether or not (given the context of the situation) someone's post is tagged as:

1. You Are The Asshole (YTA)
2. They Are The Asshole (TTA)
3. Everyone Sucks Here (ESH)
4. No Assholes Here (NAH)
5. Didn't provide enough context for the situation (INFO)

## 1.2 What is an asshole? (Descriptions and Definitions)

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The official definition of an "asshole" is someone who is mean, despicable, and contemptible. For the purposes of our guidelines, our definition will include and expand upon this. First, we define important terms used throughout the rest of this guideline.

### *1.2.1 Definition of Other Important Terms:*

1. **Conflict:** Everything that takes place during the situation, in which differences in interests, opinions, values, and or opinions occur between individuals or groups.
2. **Aftermath:** The aftermath of a conflict refers to the process of determining its outcome, which can be positive, negative, or neutral. Any resolutions or updates made after the conflict can be referred to as the aftermath.
3. **Context:** the background, perhaps trying to validate why OP acted in the way they did
4. **Question:** the inquiry posed either at the beginning or the end, usually summarizing why OP might be the asshole and asking if others agree or not.
5. **OP:** original poster, the anonymous individual who wrote the post on the subreddit.
6. **Other party:** Typically, the OP will pose a question at the end, which is along the lines of "AITA if I do X to Y". We define the "other party" as who the OP is posing that their actions did/will affect. The "other party" is whichever individuals are involved that the OP is in direct opposition against/whoever they are writing the post about.
7. **AITA?:** A common question posed in the dataset, where the OP asks if they are the asshole (Am I the Asshole?).

### *1.2.2 Moral Principles and Rules*

For the purposes of these guidelines, we will universalize the process by following the 7 principles listed in by W.D. Ross, known as the *prima facie* rules:

1. Fidelity: tell truth
2. Reparations : compensate anyone you've injured
3. Gratitude: return favors others do for you
4. Justice: ensure goods are rewarded by merit not favor

5. Beneficence: do what you can to improve condition of others
6. Self-improvement: do what you can to improve intelligence
7. Non-maleficence: don't hurt others

Anything that hurts or negatively impacts others by breaking any of these 7 rules can count as a knock on whoever commits the act. It is up to the reader's discretion and the context of the situation.

It is also important to note that though each person will rank the importance of these rules differently (and the severity if broken), there are also individual severity levels within the rules themselves. For example, one might think breaking non-maleficence is worse than breaking gratitude, but even within breaking non-maleficence there are different wrongs (punching someone vs. murder). Since each person is driven by their own moral compass, this will create a gray area when determining some labels (ESH, NAH, as further clarified in sections 1.3.3, 1.3.4, and 1.5.3).

#### *1.2.3 How we define being an asshole:*

##### 1. During the conflict:

In the simplest sense, if the action of the OP breaks any ethical/moral rules as defined in 1.2.2, and it impacts the other party, then OP would be the asshole. While it is important to follow this guideline, there are plenty of scenarios that do not explicitly spell-out that either party has broken any of the above rules. It is up to the annotator to use common sense and determine whether or not either party's action breaks the rules. Here are some common examples for each of the 7 rules (not an expansive list):

1. Fidelity: lying, manipulation, gaslighting,
2. Reparations: failing to see one's faults, refusing to take accountability
3. Gratitude: being ungrateful, rude, spiteful
4. Justice: not treating others with fairness, not being equitable
5. Beneficence: selfishness, not thinking about how others might be hurt
6. Self-improvement: being entitled, selfish, not caring about anyone else
7. Non-maleficence: physical violence, disrespect, guilting

##### 2. Aftermath:

Sometimes, just because someone hurts someone else, it doesn't necessarily mean they're the asshole.

*"I was walking on the street yesterday, and I accidentally **bumped into them and food got all over their clothes**. I felt very bad, **apologized right away, and offered to go into the nearest Starbucks to get them napkins**. They said it was fine but I could tell they were still pretty annoyed. AITA?"*

Even though the OP hurt the other party by bumping into them, in the aftermath they ended up apologizing. They had no intention to bump into the other party and even though the other party might still be annoyed, OP tried their best to remedy the situation. This aftermath counteracts what would tag OP as an asshole. If OP didn't apologize and kept walking, then they probably would be the asshole; What happens in the aftermath is crucial to determining if someone is an asshole. Here, we have laid out standards for when the aftermath is bad, and OP would still be an asshole.

If they don't try and fix the problem/compromise

- If they don't apologize
- Someone who doesn't try to understand the opposing perspective
- If they are unreasonable and illogical
- If they never bring up their issue to the other party
- If their response to the conflict breaks any ethical/moral rules

### 3. Direct Relationship

There are two parties involved, OP and the other party. We will only count being an asshole as being mean, rude, or breaking any of the rules in 1.2.2 if they are explicitly directed towards OP.

*“...to my nieces mom.*

*I'll try to keep this short. My niece is 8 years old and lives FT with her mom. Sometimes I pick her up and the few times I have, my niece has been dirty. Or just...unkempt. The last time I picked her up, she was dirty, her hair was a mess, her clothes were soiled, and she had shoes on that were 2 sizes too big for her. [...] That makes me angry because I feel like her mom is neglectful- her mom doesn't work but obviously smokes pot (the car smelled like it when they opened the door), so there's no reason she can't care for her kids.*

*WIBTA if I sent her a text asking her to make sure my niece is clean and groomed, with clean clothes and things the next time she visits?”*

In this example, the other party is the niece's mom. As we define what an asshole is, even though the mom neglecting the child is not good, the mom is not necessarily being an asshole and doing any direct negative action towards OP. This would be an example of NAH (No Assholes Here), as we have defined, despite the fact that the niece's mom is construed as a bad person.

## 1.3 Definitions of labels ( YTA, TTA, ESH, NAH, or INFO)

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### 1.3.1 YTA (You're the Asshole)

This is the tag we will be using if we determine that the OP is an asshole given the context provided in their post. This means that the OP is in the wrong.

*Example:*

*“ I (14f) is considered quite popular at school. There is a babyish girl in my friend group that thinks quite specially about me and copy everything I do.  
She pays a lot of attention to my hobbies and likes and almost immediately copies it. It is really annoying.  
This had been going on for a year.*

***Therefore I asked my friend group to tell her the wrong places and times that we meet up as a group. I also asked them to ignore her.***

*My other friend was calling me mean for it.”*

There is no justifiable reason for OP acting the way they are (bolded text). She seems annoyed and is in-turn being rude and bullying the other party. By doing these actions, OP is acting maliciously and with ill-intent, while also never trying to mediate the conflict/issues she had beforehand.

Gray Areas:

- A potential gray area that can arise is if the OP is being a textbook-definition asshole, but to someone who wasn't directly rude to them (even if they were rude to other people and OP wants to stand up for them). We address this by our definition of who the other party is, and the need for a direct confrontation to be taking place (1.2.2, 1.2.3)

### 1.3.2 TTA (They are the Asshole)

This is the tag we will be using if we determine that the other party is an asshole given the context provided in their post. This means that the other party is in the wrong.

*Example:*

***“The other day my parents got upset with me for cooking my own food saying I should cook for everyone in the house and when my boyfriend and I go out to eat, should buy everyone else food too...Don't get me wrong, I try to help my parents out where I can but I feel like their anger was uncalled for. Is this not the right stance? Should I be making two different meals every night for my family?”***

There is no reason for the parents to be angry at OP for not making food for them. There was never an agreement between them that OP would provide food for the parents and OP did not do anything to harm their parents. In this case, the parents are not justified in their anger.

Gray Areas:

- A potential gray area is if both parties (OP and the opposing party) are being textbook-definitions of assholes, however one party's actions have more severity than the other. In this case, both sides can be labeled as assholes, however we would use this tag (TTA) as the label if the opposing side's actions hold much more severity/consequences

than the OP. If both sides are considered equal in severity of actions, ESH would be the tag used.

### 1.3.3 ESH (Everyone's Sucks Here)

This is the tag we will be using if we determine that both the poster and the OP are assholes given the context provided in their post. This means that they are both in the wrong.

#### *Example:*

*"Anyways fast forward to the last month. When our daughter sees mom first thing she started saying bullshi I tell her we don't say that word and not to say it. **My wife used to laugh when she said it but I told her not to give it attention.***

*Today she was factimeing her mom dad and sister. I was in the room and she was constantly saying it and everyone is laughing but me. I said to daughter to stop and told my wife they need to stop laughing or she won't stop. To which she replied some of them haven't heard her say it yet so chill out. **This is all on speaker phone so I said okay let's teach her some of the swear words from their language and started saying some which are worse and in line with the F word equivalent.** They did not take it kindly and her dad walked away from the phone. When the call was done she said I was out of line for that and shouldn't have over reacted like that. I said I've said it multiple times not to encourage it and it will only lead to her saying this word constantly and in public. Given her first language is going to be English why not let her swear in your first language and see how you like it. She got heated and said it's not a big deal I'm TA. "*

In this example, the dad is valid in wanting to stop his wife from encouraging their daughter to use swear words, and the wife is beneficence in not seeing from her husband's POV and how he might be hurt. However, the husband did not take the complete approach as well, and is hurting his wife by embarrassing her and insulting her friends. In the end, if he really wants his daughter to stop saying swear words, it is hypocritical for him to—instead of approaching it from a logical perspective—teach his daughter even MORE swear words.

#### Gray Areas:

- Please refer to the gray area section for TTA (They are the Asshole).

### 1.3.4 NAH (No Assholes Here)

This is the tag we will be using if we determine that neither the poster or the OP are assholes given the context provided in their post.

#### *Example:*

*"I (33m) have noticed in the past month that my GF (29f) hasn't been eating as much as she normally does. **We have been together for 4 years now and while she has never had the best appetite it has never been at the level it is at now.***

*For context she rarely eats breakfast and the times that she does it means she doesn't eat lunch, but she has always had lunch and dinner. I normally give us the same portions for dinner and then if she has any leftovers I will eat them (she gives me her plate I don't just take them) but it's never a huge amount.*

*The last few weeks I have only seen her have lunch once and that was the one day she didn't eat any dinner. We were staying with my family due to renovations at our place and my mom kept mentioning to her that she wasn't eating*

*lunch. My mom is a bit overprotective at times and was concerned for her health but my GF had a virus at the same time (this came after the appetite left her) so put it down to illness and it was left at that.*

***We are back home now and she has recovered from the flu but I'm lucky if I can even get her to eat a full meal a day. Today when I noticed she had only eaten a small bag of chips I told her that this couldn't keep happening and that if she wanted to be healthy she had to eat at least two meals a day, which resulted in an argument in which she claimed I was acting like a parent and monitoring her diet.***

*I probably could have come at it from a better angle but it's been making me think as she is an adult should I have even brought it up?*

*So AITA for making this into a big deal?"*

In this example, it is clear that OP brought up their GF's eating habits out of care and concern for them rather than any malicious intent. Having been together for a significant period of time, it is understandable that OP would understand and notice if something was different from usual. Therefore, we believe it to be reasonable for them to have brought up this concern to their GF. On the other hand, the GF is also valid in not wanting to have her diet monitored. As an adult, she is in control of what she eats and how much/when she eats, and no one else should have a say in that. The GF also did not react unreasonably and rather expressed her opinions. Therefore, both parties in this case are valid in their actions and no one can be determined an asshole.

Gray Areas:

- There are instances in which a party is constructed to be a bad person; however, if any of their actions to the OP aren't defined as being an asshole as we defined, then they would not be considered an asshole. The example in 1.2.3 under Direct Relationship displays an instance of this where the label is NAH.

#### *1.3.5 INFO (Didn't provide enough context for the situation)*

This is the tag we will be using if we determine that given the context provided in their post, more information is needed to come to a conclusion and no decisive decisions can be made.

*Example:*

*I'm a twenty year old female, I have an older brother (21) and my mom ended up giving birth to my younger brother when I was ten (so he's currently ten) ... I call my little brother babe, not all the time and imo not in a weird way. He'll be like 'hey sissy' and i'll answer with a 'yes babe?' I've never thought of it in the same way I call my boyfriend babe, it's just something I do. He's honestly my favorite person and I feel like a second mom to him. The other day, I had a friend of mine tell me that it makes them uncomfortable that I call him that and that 'he's my brother I don't need to be calling him babe' and i've never even thought about it in a weird way but now i'm worried that other people who hear me say it think i'm creepy and i'm just wondering if it's something I should stop?*

In this example, it is unclear what the actual brother thinks of this situation. The brother is the person directly affected by OP's words and thus it would be important to know what he thinks in order to make a decision on whether or not to stop. Also, OP's question is unclear and not what we are trying to address as they are not asking whether or not their actions are those of an asshole, but just questioning if they should stop.

## Gray Areas

- Bias: There could be bias in all of these texts. Human nature is to not enjoy being the one to be in the wrong or make someone feel bad. Thus, the OP could be sugarcoating instances where they're at fault and over exaggerating things the other party did wrong to them, to put them in a better situation. Acknowledging this bias through looking at the language used, the tone in the text, etc. can account for this bias.

## 1.4 What text being considering in the annotation process

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Each text in the AITA dataset can be broken into 4 main sections, context, conflict, aftermath, and question. Due to the nature of the task, it is important to consider all sections of the text, so there is no text that will not be considered.

*“To provide context, our daughter is 19 months now and we went on vacation 3 months ago with wife’s sister, husband and two boys age 10,11. One of them kept saying bulsh\*t around her I didn’t like it around her but found it funny when he would say it. They are from Europe and English isn’t their first language. We live in Canada. [...] Anyways fast forward to the last month. When our daughter sees mom first thing she started saying bullshi I tell her we don’t say that word and not to say it. My wife used to laugh when she said it but I told her not to give it attention.*

*My wife FaceTimes her family often and when daughter sees them she will say the word they will laugh and I’ll tell my wife again not to give it attention.*

*Today she was factimeing her mom dad and sister. I was in the room and she was constantly saying it and everyone is laughing but me. I said to daughter to stop and told my wife they need to stop laughing or she won’t stop. To which she replied some of them haven’t heard her say it yet so chill out. This is all on speaker phone so I said okay let’s teach her some of the swear words from their language and started saying some which are worse and in line with the F word equivalent. They did not take it kindly and her dad walked away from the phone. When the call was done she said I was out of line for that and shouldn’t have over reacted like that. I said I’ve said it multiple times not to encourage it and it will only lead to her saying this word constantly and in public. Given her first language is going to be English why not let her swear in your first language and see how you like it. She got heated and said it’s not a big deal I’m TA.*

*So Reddit AITA for saying what I said while she was on speaker phone with her family around me and making them feel uncomfortable?*

*I’m in no way trying to be controlling but it’s funny when another kid swears and yes I’m a hypocrite because this is my daughter who else is suppose to teach her right from wrong.”*

In this example, the post is broken down into 4 categories (not every post can include all 4, but should include the context, conflict, and question section):

1. **Context (blue):** The context section helps provide backstory that will lead to what caused the conflict, or will set up whether the conflict will seem justified for the reader. This allows us to figure out whether OP’s actions are justified given the situation, or not. In this example, the context is the dad explaining how his daughter started using profanity, and how he’s mad at the friends for rewarding his daughter for saying curse words.

2. **Conflict (green)**: The conflict section provides the instigation point that led to OP posting this. It can be initiated by either the other party or the OP. In this example, the conflict is OP beginning to curse in the family friends' first language as retaliation for their actions towards his daughter. This is important for our annotating process because it shows what the actual issue is. Based on the context, we need to determine whether or not OP's actions in the conflict are justified.
3. **Aftermath/Response (red)**: The aftermath section is what resulted in the conflict. This can either be OP's reaction or the other party's reaction. In this example, the aftermath is the wife saying he was out of line for his actions, and him trying to reason with his own actions during the conflict. We need the aftermath in order to determine whether either side acted reasonably, or if either side tried to fix the situation earnestly. The aftermath could also be a hypothetical response that the OP is considering in response to the conflict.
4. **Question (purple)**: the question can provide greater clarification for who the other party is (wife, family friends) and what specifically OP thinks is the asshole-move that they are asking about.

In conclusion, the labels we will use to determine if OP is the asshole incorporate all 4 important elements of each text in the dataset. To ignore any words, despite any misspellings or grammatical mistakes, could ignore important context that will give the correct tag.

## 1.5 Methodology to determine annotated label

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When determining the proper label for each text, this guideline incorporates the basic rough order in which to read and interpret posts:

### 1.5.1 Basic Structure for analyzing texts

1. **Take everything at face-value**: Unless wording seems suspicious, or if OP contradicts themselves within the post, assume everything in the post is true.
2. **Read the question asked by OP** (can be anywhere in the text, most likely in the beginning or end). Look for the common phrases, though not all questions are posed this way:
  - a. "AITA if X?"
  - b. "WIBTA if X?" (Would I be the asshole)

*"[...] Now, don't think this is like me being possessive, it isn't. Last time they seen their dad face to face he hurt them alot. He broke two young girls hearts and left us to pick up the pieces.*

***AITA for not wanting to put my nieces through that again?"***

From this question, one can gauge what the main conflict might be about; something to do with the OP's family and how they are fighting about how to raise OP's nieces.



3. Look at the context of the conflict. After gauging what it might be from the question, determine what the context behind the fighting might be. This could allow for greater understanding of the situation.
4. Read the conflict, see what negative impact OP might have had on the other party.
5. Read the aftermath, to see how OP or the other party reacted, and if both reactions are justified.

### 1.5.2 In-depth decision tree (after reading question and context)

Starting from the conflict, or the initial situation presented, we determine who initiated it. The posts on the r/AITA page are typically one of two situations...

1. OP asking if their reaction to a conflict was unjustified:

*“The other day **my parents got upset with me for cooking my own food** saying I should cook for everyone in the house and when my boyfriend and I go out to eat, should buy everyone else food too...Don’t get me wrong, I try to help my parents out where I can but I feel like their anger was uncalled for. **Is this not the right stance? Should I be making two different meals every night for my family?**”*

In the example above, the first bold phrase indicates that the OP’s parents got upset with them first, so the parents would be considered as starting the conflict. In the second bold phrase, the OP asks if their stance (reaction) towards their parents’ harshness is correct or not.

2. OP asking if their initiation of a conflict was unjustified. In order for OP to be the initiator of conflict, their direct action needs to be the cause of the other party’s reaction (this can be speculated):

*“Alex admitted to the emotional affair but begged me not to reveal it to Jordan. They claimed it was a mistake, that it had ended, and they were working on fixing their relationship[...] **Ultimately, I decided to talk to Jordan privately and share the truth,** thinking that it was better to save them from further heartbreak in the long run. **Jordan was devastated, and Alex felt utterly betrayed by me for breaking their trust.**”*

In this example, the first bolded phrase is the action that OP took that initiated the other party’s reaction in the second bolded phrase. So, OP both initiated the conflict and is asking whether or not their action is justified. If OP had not revealed what the other party’s reaction to the conflict was, or if they’re speculating what the other party might do, they are still the initiator of the conflict.

Based on these two scenarios, two methodologies emerge...

1. OP initiates the conflict:

In this case, we come up with a label depending on the conflict. The annotator should look for any of the 7 defined principles of morality that have been broken.

- a. If no rules in 1.2.2 have been broken, then look to the other party's actions given the situation. If the other party has broken any rules, then they will be given the label of **TTA**. Otherwise, no party has committed any particular wrong-doing and the OP's text will be labeled **NAH**.
- b. If any rules in 1.2.2 have been broken, then we look into the aftermath.
  - i. If OP tries to remedy the situation, and the action taken to try and fix the situation is of a reasonable effort given the offense, then continue with the same line of reasoning as in (a). The annotator should treat fixing-the-situation as equivalent to no rules being broken
  - ii. If OP tries to remedy the situation with minimal effort given the offense, OR if they don't try and fix the situation in any way, then *tentatively label* OP as YTA. Then, from the perspective of the other party, repeat this line of reasoning starting from the beginning (a).
    1. If the tentative label from the other party is also YTA, then both parties are assholes and the finalized label is **ESH**.
    2. If the tentative label from the other party is TTA, then that means from the other party's perspective, OP is the asshole, and their finalized label would subsequently be **YTA**.

## 2. The other party initiates the conflict:

In this case, we come up with the label depending on the conflict as well. The difference here is that if the other party initiates the conflict, the annotator should flip the previous process above around. For more clarity:

- a. If no rules in 1.2.2 have been broken by *the other party*, then look at *OP's* reaction to the conflict. If the other party did not do any wrongdoing (specified by the ethical guidelines we created), yet OP's reaction is illogical or irrational that negatively affects the other party, then OP will be given the **YTA** label. If OP has also not broken any ethical rules, nor acted illogically, then no party has committed any particular wrongdoing and the final label will be **NAH**.
- b. If any rules in 1.2.2 have been broken by *the other party*, then we again look into the aftermath.
  - i. If *the other party* tries to remedy the situation in any of the methods described in 1.3, and the action taken to try and fix the situation is of a reasonable, approximately equivalent effort given the offense, then continue with the same line of reasoning as in (a). The annotator should

treat fixing-the-situation as equivalent to no ethical rules being broken in the first place.

- ii. If the other party tries to remedy the situation with minimal effort given the offense, OR if they don't try and fix the situation in any way, then the other party is currently at fault, and the annotator should *tentatively label* the text as TTA. Then, from the perspective of the OP, repeat the same line of reasoning starting from the very beginning.
  1. If the tentative label from OP is also TTA, then from both the perspective of the other party AND OP, the other party is an asshole and is labeled **TTA**.
  2. If the tentative label from OP is YTA, then that means that not only is the other party an asshole, but OP is the asshole as well, and their finalized label would subsequently be **ESH**.

### *1.5.3 Example Not Within Decision Tree*

Though two main grounds were covered, there is also the instance where there is no aftermath, and all the OP gives is just the conflict at hand. It is up to the reader to speculate. An example would be if OP asks "WIBTA?" (Would I be the Asshole?).

In this specific situation where no aftermath is present, then the labeling process should go as follows:

1. Count the number of ethical rules broken by each party.
2. Label according to the number of rules broken by both OP and the other party:  
\*\*Note that a significant difference, for the purposes of these guidelines, is any difference of broken rules greater than plus or minus one. (*For example, if OP broke 2 rules but the other party broke 3, then this is not considered a significant difference, but 2 rules vs. 4-7 rules is.*) However, there are situations where even though one party breaks fewer rules, the severity of the rules broken is greater than the other party who broke more rules. In such cases, the severity is more important than the number of rules broken in determining who is the asshole..
  - a. YTA: If OP breaks more rules than the other party, with significant difference
  - b. TTA: If the other party breaks more rules than OP, with significant difference
  - c. ESH: If both parties break the same amount of rules, or there is an insignificant difference of more than one rule broken..
  - d. NAH: If both parties don't break any rule, or have only broken any combination of 0 or 1 rule.

For all three methodologies, the finalized label of **INFO** should be used sparingly, and only when the situation does not logically fall into any of the situations mentioned above.

### *1.5.4 Other considerations, gray areas, and situations*

- We use the W.D. Ross 7 defining rules, but there are so many different moral principles that exist (utilitarianism, deontology, consequentialism, etc.) We have bias in dictating which principle helps label what an asshole is and is not.
- In situations where both parties are upset with each other, but for valid reasons given the context, neither party is majorly in the wrong and the situation should be tagged NAH accordingly.

*“My potential fuck-up:*

*We have been through a bit of a rough patch a lot recently, and a problem that was brought up was our sex life and how minimal it has become. I mentioned how we have our growing differences in shapes and that i want her to be happy and healthy within herself, but also wanted to say that i am struggling with it. I mentioned how the acid reflux effects it and tried broaching the topic as gently as possible whilst trying to aim the problem being more myself rather than her weight, but maybe i said the wrong thing or shouldn't have said it at all.*

*I understand talking about weight is a very tough subject, especially someone with mental health issues, but i did not want to lie or pretend that everything is ok.*

*This was a few days ago, she told me last night how mad she is with me for it and for basically calling her fat and that i should love her or find her attractive whatever her physical differences are, which is a fair point.”*

While OP bringing up his girlfriend's weight is mean, he tried to make it as much of a him-problem as possible while trying to come from a caring place. He is also able to acknowledge that his girlfriend is right and valid in her feelings. The girlfriend is reasonably upset at OP. Both parties have valid reactions to the situation, so while it didn't end in a positive outcome, neither would be the asshole (NAH).

- Everyone's moral compass is different, perhaps not what is right and wrong, but definitely about the severity of certain crimes versus others. Is it alright to harm someone if they hurt someone you love? Can murder be justified in cases that might not be self-defense? Annotators may have different rankings of the importance/severity of the rules presented in 1.2.2, and it's important to acknowledge this.