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Janet, a fourteen year old who has just completed ninth grade, is a member of a youth orchestra scheduled to tour throughout Europe during the summer. The orchestra consists of outstanding young musicians throughout the United States who auditioned for the orchestra. All through the school year each orchestra member had to learn his or her parts of the very difficult music for the program in preparation for three weeks of intensive rehearsing in June at a summer music camp in northern Minnesota before departing for Europe. Janet has worked very hard and during the first week of rehearsal is selected for the first violin section. Janet, delighted with her success, intensifies her concentration on rehearsing, and looks forward eagerly to the tour which will begin in two weeks. During the middle of the second week of Janet's rehearsal a sudden tragedy occurs back home. A close friend of Janet named Shawn, a sixteen year old boy, who Janet dated for about four months, is killed accidentally when he collides with a motor boat while swimming after sun down.

Should Janet's parents inform her about Shawn's death in the week and a half remaining before Janet goes to Europe with the youth orchestra, or should they not tell her until she returns in the middle of August? In either case, give your reasons.

Moderator's Answer: Janet's parents must inform her of Shawn's death in the week and a half before Janet goes to Europe. It is understandable that Janet's parents would want to preserve for her the opportunity to experience her concert tour in the right frame of mind to enjoy and benefit from the tour to the fullest extent. At Janet's age (14), however, a more important consideration, from an ethical standpoint, is whether they believe Janet would want to know about Shawn's death immediately, or whether she would want her parents to withhold the information about his death from her until she returns from Europe. Unless Janet has highly unusual attitudes in this regard, her parents must assume she would want to know immediately.