

apply what I have learned from my self-evaluation? What steps can I take to improve my ability to make and keep commitments? What level of improvement is reasonable and achievable within a given timeline? How will I objectively assess and remain accountable for my progress? Have I asked my trusted advisor to assist me in this process?

1.) Why is commitment so important in life?

2.) What are 2 of the most important steps? Why?

— 12 —

## Loyalty

*Without loyalty, there can be no lasting, rewarding relationships.*

The concept of loyalty embodies many desirable character traits, including faithfulness, devotion, trustworthiness, and dependability. Loyalty also incorporates the obligation to support and defend those to whom we have pledged our allegiance, whether it is our spouse, friend, company, boss, or business associates. Loyalty is a two-way proposition. Without reciprocation, loyalty often deteriorates into distrust, anger, and betrayal.

Loyalty is not whimsical, situational, or conditional; it is a commitment. As such, we should be careful to entrust it only to those whose actions, values, morals, and ethics prove over time to be largely in agreement with ours. Misplaced loyalty inevitably causes conflict with our own principles. When this occurs frequently, we must make a choice: We can betray our principles or we can be disloyal. Either way, we lose.

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Loyalty does not imply total acceptance of everything a person says or does. True loyalty means we must be honest and have the courage to respectfully disagree with another's attitudes, actions, or behaviors in a way that is positive, thoughtful, and courteous. It also precludes our speaking to others about an individual, our employer, or our responsibilities in a way that is degrading or disrespectful. If a situation becomes intolerable, loyalty demands that we change the situation rather than resort to less honorable behaviors.

Well-placed, reciprocal loyalty is integral to achieving lasting and rewarding relationships and enhancing your *Living Well, Working Smart*. Use the *Steps to Success* and the *Mistakes to Avoid* to guide you in developing and sharing this valuable trait.

### *Mistakes to Avoid:*

- ***Trust first: Ask questions later.*** Result: Believe that everyone has your best interest at heart – do not let the established facts about human nature dissuade you. Trust foolishly, and be taken for a fool.
- ***Repay loyalty with betrayal.*** Result: A life void of meaningful, rewarding relationships.
- ***Ignore signs of disloyalty.*** Result: Hurt, disappointment, and resentment.
- ***Withholding loyalty after it has been demonstrated and earned or being suspicious of motives when proven to be honorable.*** Result: A life of loneliness and rejection.

## Steps to Success:

1. **Assess situations and people before becoming involved with them.** Questions to ask: Are the people who they purport to be? Is the situation as it appears or as they have stated it? Have I observed their actions, attitudes, and behaviors sufficiently to make an accurate assessment of their principles, values, and ethics? Are their practices in line with my values and principles? Are there any red flags or alarms? If so, am I prepared to accept the consequences of a negative outcome?
2. **Resist the urge or pressure to make a quick decision.** Questions to ask: Have I considered all factors? Do I have all the facts? Have I observed any patterns of activity or attitudes that are questionable? What are the potential benefits or pitfalls? Are there personal, professional, or legal considerations? Have I given this decision adequate time?
3. **Recognize that loyalty is a commitment that may require work and forgiveness.** Questions to ask: Do I have reasonable expectations or do I expect perfection in this relationship? Have I honestly acknowledged the differences that exist? Have I discussed conflicts courteously and constructively with the other individual? Is the conflict a singular, manageable occurrence? Are there repeated patterns indicating extensive differences in our values? Have I forgiven and let go of those times I have been disappointed? Have I asked for forgiveness for my mistakes?

4. **Actively seek ways to improve situations and relationships.** Questions to ask: Have I discussed the situation or problem openly and honestly? Have I listened with an open mind and an open heart? Have I sought a solution and not justification or retribution? Have I effectively conveyed my desire to repair any damage?
5. **Consistently demonstrate loyalty in your attitude, actions, and words.** Questions to ask: Do my actions, attitudes, or words cause doubt about my loyalty? Have I been open to feedback from others regarding my conduct, words, or attitude? Do my actions convey my regard and esteem for those who continue to earn my loyalty? Do I consistently defend and support those to whom I continue to pledge my loyalty?

1) What is the value of loyalty in life?

2) Discuss the importance of 1 of the steps. Why is it so important?