

## **Loyalty**

Loyalty is a deep commitment to an individual, cause or ideal. This commitment is from the heart, not contractual, so that any breach of expected loyalty is especially strongly felt by the offended party. It is a blow to the personhood of the offended party. Disloyalty—except, say, to an organized crime syndicate—is itself a serious breach of honor.

It is of interest that crime syndicates are particularly fastidious about the honoring of loyalty. (The same fastidiousness, one gathers, obtains among prisoners in high security federal prisons. The reason for this touchiness seems obvious, that 'honor among thieves' is an important security measure: keep the secrets locked up.) Criminals, more consequentially than others of us, are likely to desire a safe place to deposit their secrets.

In politics and dog breeding, loyalty is equally prized. A president who presides like a crime boss is prone to favor secret arrangements, and to seek intimate allies among whom loyalty is expected. (And disloyalty seriously punished). Dog breeders train their dogs to obedient loyalty—to respond on a dime to a whistle in the arena, to snarl like knives at any sound of an intruder. Fortunately for dog breeders, dogs inherit a strong gene for loyalty.

Loyalty? This discussion has taken a surprising turn. On the face of it loyalty sounds like the most praiseworthy of human emotions. In practice, though, loyalty is capable of binding people together in intimacies in which dubious concealed plans can be hatched.