

Disloyalty

Loyalty is fidelity to one's commitments, tacit or formal, to wife, companion, girlfriend, cellmate, or soldier in arms. You name it. The key to this definition of loyalty is in the word *fidelity*.

Fidelity is an absolutist word and cannot be served up in partial doses, according to English usage. You are either absolutely faithful to whatever it is, or you are not loyal to it at all. (Whether not loyal to it at all is equivalent to disloyal is of course another arguable issue, but from our present perspective loyalty is good, disloyalty bad. We are here accepting the absolutist definition of loyalty, to make our own definition clearer. You are either loyal or disloyal. Loyalty is good, disloyalty is bad, no matter to what cause, it applies.

Those who demand loyalty from others often find themselves bound by the same obligation. Can I demand loyalty from you, if I cannot guarantee it to you? This presumption may seem self-evident, but is it in fact just a commonplace expectation? Royal monarchs, gang bosses, and jealous husbands have all been known to provide evidence that loyalty need not be a two way street. The demand for absolute one way loyalty from others is in fact a specialty of the world's autocrats, who thereby, without obligation on themselves, enhance their reputations for power.