

Week 8 Sem 2

I am seldom interested in discussing ethics (forget about the weekly management passages that I hate to write). But these days, between certain dilemmas of holding different friendships (and being prompted to make the so-called 'choices' for loyalty), I often question myself the actual meaning of loyalty and promise. Before raising my points of view, let me show some official definitions of the two words below (from Google search):

Loyalty	Promise
The quality of being firm and not changing in your friendship with/ support for a person/ an organization, or in your belief in your principles	to <u>tell</u> someone that you will <u>certainly</u> do something:

Loyalty has been a highly valuable trait for centuries. Japanese samurais would perform seppuku (committing suicide by cutting their abdomens apart) to prove their loyalty and preserve their Honor; modern times have 'treason' crimes for government officials that are disloyal to their country, by probably leaking certain secrets or colliding with other foreign parties.

But for me, I consider myself valuing loyalty less than most of us. **I used to care about loyalty a lot, but much less now.** I used to expect friends acting real, genuine and consistent, on whom I can rely a lot. But through betrayals, isolation and self-reflecting over my secondary school days (when I remained without solid support from friends, and family problem exists), I also realized there are always hidden motives behind decisions - everyone has their hidden criteria (say bottom lines, or objectives to meet, or avoid negativity), and it's their freedom to choose their friends.

I have the view that **it is not practical to hold high expectations over others' behaviour** towards myself, and I don't think I should act selflessly when there is apparently nothing (and no happiness, which some altruists often get) in return, or that you don't believe they would be reciprocally good to you. Value-wise, I cannot tell everyone to prefer me over others as friends simply because they are 'supposed to be loyal to me', unless I am more 'advantageous' than their alternatives, or that I am engaged in that very relationship with that person occupying the most important (often permanent) spot, that you don't expect them to change for a long time.

I find myself holding my friends less firmly and being more adaptive to (often turbulent) changes in my surrounding social landscapes. Forgive me if I don't take some promises as firmly as I should, allow me to not always stick close to that certain batch of people because of blind loyalty.

Rather, **I believe there must be a concrete reason for loyalty**, which I think most people tend to attach with 'habits'. People are loyal as their loyal behaviour becomes a habit, and they would eventually take others' loyalty for granted. Brand loyalty of customers is often built by working on their habits. Various examples include buying the same brand of fruit juice (maybe 果汁先生? Or that brand of apple juice from Aomori), (or the same car brand, e.g. Toyota, GM) in general, because of their exquisite taste/ functions, or buying the same type of cigarettes as you form a habit over it. We stick to that close friend because s/he is reliable in giving pieces of advice, or s/he would be a high-flyer that can support you firmly when you are troubled, or you have developed emotional dependence on them based on similarities and resonances.

Some people contend that loyalty prevents instability as it makes people stick to their predictable, normal behaviour by non-bindingly regulating them to be more ethical. Loyalty, in the form of sacrificing your other possible alternatives, is also a strong pledge of your reliability and genuineness to the friend/sweetheart you care the most, and is effective in stabilizing our circles and fortifying it against further 'intrusions'. Undoubtedly, stability is to be highly treasured as it makes us more confident in carrying out decisions and planning ahead, but when we are still in such an early stage of life (more like we have lived only 1/5 of our expected years) and things are still highly uncertain (e.g. our dream jobs, our financial situations, new people we are coming across with), or with a high potential to be further improved, is forgoing alternatives with loyalty worth it? I tend to think not. And then there is also the type of people who are blindly loyal, which could also be harmful, if not dangerous. Blind loyalty to certain brands (e.g. major tech apps) may make you miss out other unique features by their

counterparts; blind loyalty to co-workers of a company might result in massive cover-ups of financial chicanery or unethical dealings (e.g. Wells Fargo's fake accounts, corruption in China); blind loyalty to a country or religion (e.g. Nazism) could lead to fanatical acts of chauvinism or violence (e.g. Jews), resulting in thousands of deaths.

I would sum up the the loyalty part of the passage with this:

Before pledging loyalty, stop and think why you have to be loyal, in particularly, to that person or organization.

To bring us to the second part of the discussion, consider that we often have to make promises in order to demonstrate our loyalty to the ones we care about. We tell our friends that we would stay loyal, and not leave them. We tell them, that we would still be here. But is that necessarily true?

Promises are being interpreted differently under varying degrees of perceived importance. Some people value loyalty and promises a lot, but interestingly, I find that I don't. Viewed from another perspective, some may criticize me for being a 'corrupt', 'integrity-lacking', 'inconsistent' individual, but I beg to differ. To some extent, oral promises are non-binding and weak, unless there are tangible strings attached to it. Law regulations (linked to penalties) in written contracts, consequence of being dismissed/ receiving an 'XF' grade/ your degree/position being relinquished when you violate against the academic honour code.

When promises are not worthy at all, why even take them? When promises are not useful and effective in conforming oneself to act in the intended way, what is the point of holding them? I am just being an individual who uses hidden self-promises and self-targets, rather than the collective, multilateral ones, to regulate myself to head for the direction I want. I am just the same consistent me acting with my own principles and self-promises.

Still, I know there are certain promises by others, that I have to fulfill and actually place a really heavy focus on... But I guess I am wired to only uphold those promises I feel really obligated to. Promises means responsibility, and is indeed a huge liability that one has to consider seriously before actually taking - I would only take up responsibilities when I feel I am confident enough. Of course, everyone hopes their friends would remain loyal throughout their life, but I tend to think this vision is mostly just a rosy picture - or at least, impractical unless you have been friends/ in love with that person for years.

A quote of friendship goes like this:

If a friendship lasts longer than 7 years, psychologists say it will last a lifetime.

I tend to think loyalty has to be built over time, and promises... A fanciful word that takes so many things to sacrifice. Honestly, I don't like to make promises, because in most cases I am not confident enough and I know there is a huge chance that I cannot fulfill it. Whatever promises I take, I am obligated to view those seriously, and incur certain restrictions - people that I could befriend with, extent of socializing, minimum time to be spent in maintaining the relationship each week - that I am possibly still reluctant to invest heavily in at this stage of life. I have only encountered few friends that have survived 7 years with me, and I look forward to seeing those who would stay. I think I can only make trustworthy promises to such people.