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Let them Go



Sometimes you have to wave goodbye to bad people. Garrett and Ronald in Uptown Dallas

Cut loose the bad people in your life. The older you get and if you know more and more people there's a certainty that you will have people in your life who were always bad people and you didn't notice because you were too close or some people simply changed for the worst. I almost didn't write this chapter because I truly love people and want to see the best in everyone. In my 30s, I realized that I accumulated some questionable characters and was worried that some of their bad habits or simply being guilty by association was outweighing being a loyal friend.

I can't begin to tell you how hard the concept of washing your hands clean of someone was for me. I am a fiercely loyal person, but their bad choices and baggage were finally becoming my burden. I am not naming names because I hope these people can change and do right by others and society. Here are some sad stories. One lifelong buddy defrauded thousands of people in a telemarketing scheme. He went to federal prison for five years. All along I sent him money, went 600 miles to visit him, bringing rolls of quarters to buy breakfast, lunch, and dinner out of a vending machine in the prisoner visitor area. Sent him money while in prison helped him when he got out.

Our mutual friend and great friend of mine, Greg Pitto got him a crazy great job making over \$100K (impossible to do right out of Federal Prison) and he proceeded to rack up over \$500K worth of bad debt for the company that gave a felon a chance, while he was starting a competitive business to steal his current employer's business. All the while he was living high on the hog. Who does that to someone that gave you a chance? So this lifelong friend was in my kitchen asking for money. I gave him a few thousand bucks and said it came with a condition, you don't ever have to pay me back, but you have to get your shit together and stop hurting others or I can't be your friend anymore.

He didn't and, in fact, started a business that directly competes with my security business. His business is a non-factor, but what amazes me is how bad off are you as a person to hurt so many around you. What's the karma on these actions? It deeply upset me for a long while because I didn't understand how

someone who I considered a very close friend could do so many people dirty. Just like it's important to do the right things and help people, you have to be true to your core values and beliefs and rid yourself of cancerous people in your life. It was really tough to end that friendship, but it had to be done.

Ex-friend No 2 story. In a crazy downward spiral, I had a friend that I met in the security business in San Antonio, Texas. He was a sales manager for a national security company and was heavy-handed with the people he managed, which should have been my first clue. He had bounced around to a few companies and one of the companies didn't hire him based on a personality test. It was so bad that my friend who was interviewing him pulled me aside to say it's the worst he has ever seen. He said you need to watch out. It's not if something bad going to happen, it's when. I was blown away by the stern warning. Being the loyal young friend I was at the time I looked the other way.

Once out of the security industry, he became a home builder. He built himself a huge home, drove the biggest pickup truck I've ever seen (Ford F650). There were more telltale signs along the way. He claimed he was divorced, then his wife would reappear? She was and is a sweetheart. He had an ever-present girlfriend that lived right over the border in Mexico who spoke no English, maybe that way she couldn't ask any questions. So as time went on he and I built speculation houses, first one sold and the economy turned and the next two sat forever, but eventually sold at a financial loss to me. I learned a valuable lesson about real estate. Speculation houses are a gamble, where buying quality rentals is a much more secure long-term opportunity to build wealth.

Back to my friend, he was building homes to sell between \$200K and \$250K. My spec houses were in the \$450K area. I asked him one day, "Do you make 20 percent on the homes you build?" and he was evasive to my question. I was trying to do the math because he was doing five or six homes (\$220K-\$250K income) living a lifestyle like he was making millions. That should be a clue to me. Most of my true friends share the good, bad, and

the ugly, and we laugh at our mistakes. Well as the economy started to turn dire in 2008 people who were running shady deals started to get exposed. The first big example was Bernie Madoff, and then every shady guy after that got outed. Home builders were literally committing suicide left and right. My buddy was still flying high, until I got the phone call.

I was at my accountant Greg Thorn's office when the voice on the other side of the call said, "I need you to not ask questions and help me." My buddy asked me to pick him up in a neighborhood park on Canyon Lake, Texas, about 240 miles from my house. "Don't bring a gun (odd request) and drive me from there to a truck stop just outside the border town of Laredo, Texas. He said, "I haven't done anything wrong, but I need to flee the country tomorrow." I tried to talk my friend out of his crazy request, told him things couldn't be that bad, reminded him of all he had going for him, but to no avail.

The next day was the Friday going into the Labor Day weekend and Crystal, the kids and I went to a friend's house in Possum Kingdom Lake, Texas. The cell phone service was non-existent which created a scenario of no phones from Friday till our drive back Monday. Driving back to civilization my cell phone was blowing up! Started with they found my buddy's truck at Canyon Lake with his wallet on the dashboard. His boat was floating unmanned on the lake. Apparently all holiday weekend long there had been both search and rescue and volunteer divers looking for the body of "my friend." Concerned innocent people investigating over their holiday weekend a smoke screen of a selfish, phony person. While these good and moral people searched, my once friend was having a margarita in Mexico with his girlfriend while his wife grieved stateside."

Turns out my once friend owed everyone from honest trades people who helped him build homes, to banks, friends, family, you name it. I understand trying a business and failing. What I don't understand is living an extremely lavish lifestyle until the end and screwing everyone, instead of trying to reverse course. Scale back, be truthful and not hurt others. I was done with my

business dealings with him by then, but felt for the others who weren't so lucky. His adventure ended when he flew back six to seven weeks later into San Antonio International Airport and there was a warrant waiting for him. For those of you who never have had a friend fake his own death, you will be amazed to learn it's not a crime!

The warrant was just a way to close the missing person's case, if he surfaced on US soil. My ex-friend, who chose to change his name, thought we could go back to being friends, but so many lies and bad karma was surrounding him I had to say my final goodbye. It was extremely hard to cut ties, but now that I'm older when I see glimpses of deceit, negative behavior, people challenging karma I distance myself and fast. If I look back on these two friends if I would have cut my losses after the first three crazy warning signs I would have been much better off!

I recently had a friend introduce me to an attorney. Seemed like a great fun guy. Now that I'm older and less naive I saw and heard the warning signs. He was going to rent his house and move into an apartment at 45 years old. He was playing poker three to four days a week and losing all the time, taking a lot of vacations while my other attorney buddies were working 60 hour weeks. Then I found out about the lawyer bar sanctions against him and he was three months behind on his office rent, all his employees quit. All the while he is extremely interested in doing some real estate deals with me. I immediately distance myself; he couldn't understand and I wasn't going to explain.

Later I ran into him and he again wanted to talk. I just gave him a look that said I can see through your bullshit, go to the next victim. Remember when you were young? Your parents didn't want you to hang out with the wrong people. Why? They could see what a young you couldn't. The same applies when you are older. Cut the dead wood so you have room for new healthy growth.