

Beware of the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I am ashamed to admit it, but I do not even own a house key. I've lived in the same house for years and never owned one.

I leave the doors of my house open.

I leave my car doors unlocked and the keys in my car when I am at home.

My wife bought me a \$25,000 watch years ago, and I tend to leave that around the house, too.

I allow people to use my credit cards and cash cards to go pick things up at the store for me and often forget to get my credit cards back for weeks.

In the past, I've trusted people I should not have with sensitive financial information.

I like to pay for dinner when I go out with people and do not expect anything in return.

If you are reading this and are thinking that I've probably been screwed over a lot, people have taken advantage of me a lot and so forth, you would be quite right. I have been taken advantage of and stolen from quite often. I've had sensitive financial information shared with the wrong people - who then tried to take advantage of me. I've been burned by many, many people.

But I have always grown and always continue to do better and better as time has gone on - socially, financially and spiritually. *How can someone grow and do so well when they are getting burned and taken advantage of all the time?*

It's very simple: I know who the bad people are and who I can trust.

There is a real joy in living a life where I trust and see the best in others and not the other way around. I am not stressed about people doing bad things to me because I see the best in others. I have to live my life that way, and I want nothing more than to see the best in others. Doing so benefits me and others. I am in the employment business, and my days are spent thinking about what people are capable of. I do not want to judge people and think the world and the people in it are evil and out to get me. I want to see the absolute best I can in the world and the people in it. I need to.

Are there bad people out there? You bet there are. There are tons of them, and I feel sorry for them all. Do I associate with bad people? Not once I realize they are bad. Once I realize people are bad, I stay completely away from them and avoid them for good. You should too. You have nothing to gain from bad people. Anyone who violates your trust or property is someone you should avoid. They do this out of a sense of their own "lack" and have nothing to give you.

People who steal and take advantage of you do so because they cannot possibly give you as much as you can give them. These people are the people who look at the world as a bad place that is a dog-eat-dog place where they need to harm others to survive. The people who believe they need to harm others to survive are incredibly dangerous.

Once I realize that someone is a bad person, I can easily be done with them and move on. It is that simple. It is because I am vulnerable that I am protected. In almost all instances, bad people quickly make their stripes known if you let down your guard. It is like this socially, in business and everywhere you turn.

Bad people show up everywhere. When you allow yourself to be vulnerable, you see who they are. I have to admit, though, that I am often surprised by how evil people exert their will.

Several months ago, I hired an architect to make some calls for me. He estimated the work would cost "a few thousand dollars" and sent me a contract for his hourly services and a request for a "retainer" to cover his work of \$3,000. When I was in his office, I noticed it was only he and his secretary. The office looked like it was built to hold far more people than this; however, the man was only there with his secretary and the extra desks seemed to have been abandoned some time ago. I knew of several other architectural firms around the town where I worked, and they always seemed to be filled with people.

Often times, a good way to recognize the sort of people who will try to harm you is an absence of people, and success, around them. This is so because people avoid those who are bad. Businesses run by people that are bad drive away both employees and clients. People who are bad drive away others as well. People and businesses that are alone are often that way because people avoid them.

A few days after meeting him, I was in the dentist office, and he was in the room next to me having some work done. I heard the architect talking with the dentist and asking about the price of a pain medication at the local pharmacy. The doctor told him he could save \$20 on the medication if he drove 30 minutes away (one hour round trip). The architect said that the "... last thing he was going to do was get screwed out of \$20..." and (despite having his mouth sewed up) told the dentist he was going to the pharmacy 30 minutes away instead of the one around the corner from the dentist.

I made a note to myself that anyone who was going to drive one hour to save \$20 out of fear of getting "screwed" was probably going to end up screwing me in my architectural dealings with him. If he was billing me for his time at \$250 an hour, he could not possibly have that much work. Why else would he be so concerned about saving \$20?

A month later, the architect sent me a bill for \$16,000. I have no idea what he did; however, he vastly worked beyond the retainer we originally agreed upon, and I am confident he did not work as many hours as he said he was going to work. I learned later that he had done this sort of thing with numerous people and had been involved in several lawsuits. He completely abused my trust. I'm going to fight him in court about this, and why not?

While this may not sound like a good story, in fact it is. Imagine if I had ended up hiring this guy to design a house for me? I would have been ripped off and taken advantage of in countless different ways. I would have overpaid, gotten poor quality and had all sorts of problems and issues. Because he was so eager to rip me off, he never got the other work I could have given him. Because he never got the other work, his company is not growing.

When you are vulnerable with others, you will learn who is good and who is bad. There are countless people out there who will harm you first chance they get, or will do so over an extended period of time. The most dangerous are not always the people who harm you right away. Instead, the most dangerous are the people who will appear to be your friend but will harm you slowly.

When someone screws you over immediately, you are ready for it and can avoid them in the future. However, if someone acts like your friend, often does the right thing and then harms and takes from you in some situations, it can be incredibly dangerous. If someone is inconsistent with you, then this is where the real harm can occur.

Many people believe that their own survival depends on keeping others down. Therefore, they may appear very kind to others on the surface and even go out of their way to do various symbolic things to look like nice people. However, if someone is under the belief that their own survival depends on keeping others down, they can do all sorts of harm to you that you might not ever see coming.

For the longest time, I have been fascinated by watching the dynamics within various offices and departments of the companies I run. In most offices and departments, a leader will naturally emerge and be the conduit for communications and a "representative" of sorts for what is going on with the group. They will forward news up the chain of command and act as a "listening post" of sorts for others - offering an ear, or encouragement, or something else.

What ends up happening with these groups is generally one of three things: the group stays the same, the group grows and does very well, or the group experiences all sorts of problems.

When the group is doing well, this generally means that this leader is encouraging people in the group. The people in the group feel good about their jobs and what they are doing. They are motivated. The leader is "subtly" or directly encouraging people to grow and encourage others. The leader is allowing people to see the good in the situations and genuinely wants to help others.

In contrast, there is always one group that is failing. People in the group are leaving. People may be having all sorts of relationship problems outside of work. Other people in the group may be having health problems. There often is no end to the problems that people in the group may experience. In many cases, you will find that the people in this group were all very successful before they became part of the group. In these situations, it is clear that the group is often the problem.

I've watched the negative dynamic develop numerous times throughout my career, and I've seen it in many other groups as well. What usually happens is this:

The "representative" of the group usually comes to their supervisor and tells the supervisor all sorts of things that people in the group are upset about. The representative then positions themselves as the "friend" of the supervisor who has the best interest of the supervisor at heart. The representative then shares that "they do not know why," but people come to them with their complaints and issues all the time.

Over time, the "representative" typically uses this position to try and get raises, special privileges, and so forth. If left unchecked, this process will continue indefinitely until the company is destroyed. The reason is due to nothing more than the simple fact that the "representative" is encouraging people to feel negatively and rewarding them with time, advice and so forth when they share negative information, and shunning them when they are doing poorly.

In the end, the people around the "representative" then remain focused on the negative aspects of their jobs and lives. Because they are so down, they may quit, get sick, not work as hard, and generally be unmotivated and fail. Meanwhile, the "representative" is empowered and ends up looking like the only one the supervisor can count on. The "representative" asks for more privileges, more money and so forth and tells the supervisor how lucky they are to have them.

The representative has succeeded by disempowering others; however, ultimately, they have weakened the group and end up taking far more than they give.

When I was fourteen years old, my father got remarried. The woman he married had two who had dropped out of high school and joined the service and another who had dropped out of school when she was fourteen years old.

When I first moved in with my stepmother and father, I was a poor student. When I was a poor student and got bad grades and experienced a lack of success, my stepmother was very nice to me. She would spend time with me, tell me how the world was unfair, and take me out to eat. She was, in short, a good friend of mine. She was a very unhappy person. Her life had been a series of failures that I am not eager to talk about even now.

At some point, though, I realized that a life of not succeeding and doing well was not for me. So, instead of going along with all of this, I turned it on full blast and gave school and life everything I had. Within one year, I went from being the worst student in my school to the best. I went from hanging out with stoners to being a varsity athlete in a few sports. I went from being a down kid to being the president of the student council.

As soon as I started doing well, my stepmother turned downright vicious. She ignored me and would not acknowledge me. She would try and get me in trouble for petty things (a glass not rinsed off in the sink) and was no longer my friend. I could not possibly get inside her mind, but I believe that my doing well did not make her feel good as a parent when she had two children that had never done well. My doing poorly was something that served to validate her and advance her own self-interest.

Had I continued doing poorly, I have no doubt she would have continued to be my friend.

One of the most important things to realize in your life is that you can never hurt yourself by being "directly" vulnerable. In most cases, you are going to learn very quickly who your enemies are, and you can protect yourself from them.

The biggest danger is the wolf in sheep's clothing. You are indirectly vulnerable and subject to manipulation and hurt all the time by people who may actually appear to be your friend - even though they are encouraging negativity and self-destructive behavior.

You should be careful of people who encourage you to share negative information and be negative. They usually have a vested interest in making you negative (because it can make them more successful). The reason the wolf in sheep's clothing is so dangerous is because of the fact that they can depress your drive, enthusiasm, and happiness and encourage something altogether different - and you might not even know what hit you. In contrast, the wolf at least looks like a wolf.