

Do Not Be Vengeful: Let Hurt and Anger Go Through You

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

He who conquers the mind, conquers the world. -Guru Nanak Dev

In today's economy, a lot of people are losing their jobs. People are being fired and let go from companies at an alarming rate. There is a huge sense of betrayal people feel when they lose a job. People are incredibly angry at their employers and often life itself. There is also a tendency for people who feel they have been wronged to want to "lash out" at their employers who have fired them. Many of these people become angry, not just at the employer where they have lost their job, but at all employers. They take on a vengeful attitude towards the world.

A couple of years ago, I hired a guy who was very talented and had been fired from his last job. He had a home and a family and came in and interviewed with our company, and I ended up offering him the job. His work was not that great but he did good enough work that he was not in danger of losing his job. I had cordial relations with him and said hello to him when I saw him in the office. No one ever said anything mean to him, and no one was ever critical of him. He was paid a good wage and was doing just fine in his job.

I had heard from some other people that were friendly with him that he had been fired from his job in a manner that was probably unfair. He had upset the wrong person inside his company and one day someone appeared at his office door and told him he was fired and had to leave immediately. The man was very angry. I am sure this was difficult for him.

One day, he came into my office and fired me.

"I am leaving tomorrow, I have another job," he told me. He seemed to be relishing putting me in a bind like this. Most employees give at least some notice, but this guy was just walking out of the job. I was fine with that; however, he was in the middle of a huge project.

"I will finish it over the week weekend if you pay me for two days," he said.

So we paid him his final check and it contained two extra days of salary. He did not do the work over the weekend. We called him and emailed him about it constantly, and he finally replied a week or so later:

"Sorry guys. I am too busy in my [new job](#) to get this done. Good luck to you guys!!"

I was astonished by this but let it go. We could have pursued the money and won, but for whatever reason, this guy had some anger he was acting out against us. A couple of weeks later, we hired his replacement. The replacement showed up to work, and we realized that the computer the guy who quit had been using had all sorts of passwords on it that made the files inaccessible. I was a little upset about this because the computer he was using was a \$6,000 computer.

We called him at work and asked him for the passwords. He refused to give us the passwords and told us he forgot them. I was amazed and sat down for a few minutes pondering this situation. Then I called him on the phone:

"If you do not email me the passwords in the next 20 minutes" I told him, "My next call is going to be to your boss. I am going to tell him about how you stole two days worth of pay from us and also about how you are refusing to give us the passwords. I am not sure what your problem is because we have been very nice to you. You have some anger you need to work through, but we are an inappropriate target for this."

A few minutes later the passwords arrived.

Four or five months later, this guy used me as a reference for a job and I got a call from an employer. He had apparently lost his last job. Then a few months ago, I got another call from an employer where he had used me as a reference. I cannot imagine why I would be listed as a reference after this. This guy was very angry at the world, and this anger was playing itself out like a cancer through his career. I feel sorry for him despite what he has done to me.

Do you have anger and vengeance in your career? Is anger and vengeance playing a part in your career and life at the moment? If it is, you need to step back and take a quick inventory because this is something that is incredibly harmful and can really hurt you quite badly.

I remember speaking with my wife about a year or so ago, and we were talking about the people who are the best hires. One of our recruiters at one of our companies, [BCG Attorney Search](#), has been recruiting for about 40 years and once told me "never hire someone who has been fired from their last job." He told me that these people are usually "pissed off" and they take it out on their next employer. There is a lot of truth to this. If someone hurts us, we want to hurt someone back. We look for the closest related target, and that is usually the next person who is our employer.

As you surely have as well, I have been hurt by many people in the past. I have been hurt by lovers, employees and friends. I have also done my share of hurting other people. Deep down, I have a lot of pain for both being hurt and the hurt I have caused others:

- I have allowed women to fall in love with me, even though I did not want a future with them and kept the relationship going longer than I should have.
- I have let employees go who were good people when a given business could not support them economically.
- I have not returned phone calls or responded to emails from people who were reaching out to me.

Similarly, all of this sort of stuff has been done to me as well.

A few weeks ago, I was at a retreat called the "Man Kind Project," and someone got up and started talking about how most men are "full of shit" and never tell the truth. They are not honest with others and also not honest with themselves. This was explained in an incredibly effective way and, after the speech about this, many of the men in the audience were quite moved.

They said hearing this was transformative. Not being honest with ourselves and the people around us is something many of us do. More than this, when we are dishonest with ourselves, we are seeing the world in a way that it does not really exist.

Over the past several years, I have employed several hundred people in one capacity or another. Every so often, someone turns out to be a "bad person" and has interests that lie in things like stealing or being dishonest. These people are, of course, always fired from the company, but an interesting thing always happens with these people. I always hear from them again--even after several years.

And when I hear from them, they are usually coming back to attack me and even the score. This is something we are all doing. We look around at the world with anger and are looking to even the score in some way. It is like this with careers.

It is paradoxical that they want to even the score with me since they have harmed me (or my company) in the first place, but this is how many of our minds work.

Every thought you have brings either happiness or sadness, love or hate, peace or war, vengeance or acceptance. There is no such thing, for example, as a neutral thought. Every thought we have is something that is bringing us closer to something positive or something negative. The battle for the control and direction of your mind is a massive and incredibly important undertaking, and it is one you are responsible for. Most of us never learn how to control our thoughts and the direction they can take us in. However, the power of our thoughts is something that is incredibly transformative, not just our consciousness but our life. The more we control our thoughts and put them in a positive direction, the better we can do. Pushing your mind in a negative direction that is based on vengeance, anger and so forth does no good. You should be pushing your mind towards something positive.

Everything we see is the result of our thoughts. Thoughts are something that shape everything around us and our entire world. True thoughts create their own reality and false thoughts create their own reality, as well. This is one reason it is so important that we are constantly guarding our mind against negative thoughts in the world. We see in others the worst in ourselves.

When you try and stand up for something, people are always going to come back at you to try to even the score--even after several years. Even when you are right about something. This is one reason you need to be very careful about what you want to stand for. The more you stand for something, the more you are likely to be attacked.

When I was in high school and college, I never smoked marijuana. I was very against this. The reason was mainly due to the fact that I had seen some kids I know change completely when they started smoking the stuff. Their minds literally turned to mush, and it seemed that all they could say were words like "dude" and so forth. Their grades cratered, and it really messed them up. This is not to say that this happens to everyone who uses marijuana, but it happens to some people. Many people can be incredibly productive despite smoking marijuana daily. Nevertheless, I took a stand against the drug.

What ended up happening is that the people who used the drug and knew I was against it, started finding fault with me. I stopped being invited to parties where people were smoking marijuana. My friends who smoked marijuana stopped wanting to hang around me when they went out and smoked marijuana. Taking a stand always creates a reaction.

A few days ago, I was at a conference walking down a hallway in Atlanta and my cell phone rang. I picked it up, and it was someone who had worked with our company several years ago. While I do not want to get into too many specifics, this person did some bad things to me and the company:

- Before losing his job, he had gone through various databases and deleted numerous records of our clients.
- This person had told at least one person he had stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars from our company while employed with us by billing people for work our company did in such a way that he got paid directly and not our company.
- Using our records that he had stolen and deleted, he went out and started a business in the exact same field that we had trained him in (after pretending to me that money could not be made in the field)--because he was using the business' resources and then sending people bills independently.

There were a ton of warning signs I should have seen before I even hired this person:

- This person had been someone I had hired after he had been fired from a [law firm](#) after only working there a few months. I felt sorry for him and felt, at the time, felt there was some sort of injustice that must have been done to him.
- Then he got to our company and could not get along with others. The problem got so bad others refused to work in the same building as him.
- I then tried to allow the person to run his own business in our company. This, of course, did not work either and it was one of the biggest business mistakes I ever made.

I am not angry about any of this because I made a massive mistake in my character judgment and others had as well.

There are some people out there who just do stuff like this and always will. My lesson is just to stay away from them and avoid them at all costs.

When the phone rang and I heard the person's voice, however, I knew it would be some sort of attack and attempt to "even the score"--no matter how trivial the matter. *People that wrong you mercilessly and with no reason are generally looking for some sort of justification for doing so and will keep looking for reasons until they find them.* They want you to deserve it, and they want to feel like they have done the right thing in hurting you.

The psychology that lies behind this sort of individual is something I have seen time and time again. Over the next several minutes, the person proceeded to tell me that I had a very similar picture on one of our corporate websites that they had on some website they had launched three weeks ago. They accused me of copying the picture. When I looked into the matter, I discovered that not only were the pictures different, but we had our website page built over a year before this person even launched their website. Not only that, but the pictures were completely different. The absurdity of this was magnified by the fact that this person had a tiny little site that was not even averaging 50 visitors a day. I operate one of the larger career companies in the world, and our sites typically average millions of visitors a month.

This person was out there in the world looking for any possible reason to attack me because he was looking to even the score and looking for some sort of justification for what he had done. The person sees the world in terms of evil and bad will. The reason he thinks this way, I think, is because he has bad will. When you see things in a negative manner, you will spread bad will.

When I was in college, I had a very nice girlfriend. The only problem was that when I got to [law school](#) in Virginia, several of

my fraternity brothers called me and told me she was dating another man in Chicago as well as dating me. Unfortunately, this was not something I was aware of. We probably would have ended up getting married at some point had I not learned about this sooner. It was a devastating experience; however, I am glad it happened then rather than when I was married. I was very upset and over the course of a very animated phone call, I ended the relationship.

It was a very difficult time. I am sure she was upset, as well. We became friends of sorts and she would check in with me every three to six months, but I knew the relationship would never go anywhere again because of the fact of what she had done. Thinking back on this, I feel sort of sorry for her and I am not sure why. I have compassion for her despite what she did to me.

Around 8 years later, I was married and living in Los Angeles. I was operating a [legal career](#) company that was doing well. I was sitting in my home reading a book one evening. The night before, I had a large party with all of my employees, their families and probably around 100 other people. During the party, I had spent a couple of hours speaking to a very talented girl who had gone to Harvard Law School and worked in a couple of excellent law firms. I thought she showed a lot of potential and was hoping that she would come to work for one of my companies. I was in "recruiting mode" and was recruiting her for one of my companies. Also at the party was a relative of someone who knew my college girlfriend. I did not speak to them much at the party, but exchanged a few pleasantries.

"I know you are cheating on your wife and having an affair!" my ex-college girlfriend said when I picked up the phone.

"Excuse me?"

"I know you are cheating on your wife!"

She then slammed down the phone. Since I was not cheating on my wife, the only thing I can figure is that her friend who was at my party must have reported that my chat with the girl at the party amounted to something more than it was.

I had no telephone number to call my ex-girlfriend back at. That was the last I have heard from her--ever. It is the strangest thing. But this is the sort of pattern I have seen numerous times. She somehow was justifying her past actions based on reading something into a conversation I had at a party eight years later!

She had evened the score in her own mind, I suppose. However, what good did this do her--sitting around for eight years looking to even the score? In addition, she was so eager to even the score she was using information that was not even correct.

You need to realize that it does you no good in your career and life to try to even the score. When you are trying to even the score, you are in a state where nothing good can come of it. Trying to prove something to your next employer due to the way you want to perceive the world is not worth it. You do not want to let your mind be transfixed on negative and destructive thoughts. Think about what is positive.

Losing a job, being betrayed, being stolen from, and more are all horrible things to happen to us. The worst thing you can do, however, is allow this to occupy your mind and look to put your anger, sadness and so forth on another. Let the pain go through you and move on.

THE LESSON

Every thought you have ultimately brings you closer to something positive or negative; you must therefore learn to control your thoughts, and direct them towards something positive. Negative experiences happen to all of us, but the worst thing you can do is let these things control your mentality instead of moving on.

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