

Every Attorney's Biggest Weakness is Their Need to Feel Important and Loved

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office Managing Director

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If someone does not make us feel important, we do not feel good about ourselves.

We often rebel against the people who made us feel unimportant.

To be good at your job, you need to make others feel important and taken care of.

You should seek first to advocate for others, then they will advocate for you.

A 29-year old woman down the street from me takes my parrot for long walks each day. She comes into the house, grabs the parrot, walks with her on the beach, sings to her, and spends long hours with her (a Hyacinth Macaw). The parrot makes her extremely happy, and I am okay with her spending so much time with the parrot.

While I make sure I spend an hour a day with the parrot watching television and entertaining her, any extra attention the parrot can get is welcome. The parrot is loud and screams all the time and needs a lot of attention. She has a huge cage directly on a porch on the beach and entertains herself screaming at passersby all day. There is generally a crowd of people watching the parrot and talking to her. It seems to be good for all--but the parrot is very loud, obnoxious, and trouble. Before her, I had an African Grey parrot, which was much smaller, quieter, and easy to get along with. The African grey was killed by a hawk on a perch in a covered porch at my last house. When that happened, I decided to get an exceptional bird, so I bought the Hyacinth Macaw.

The girl that takes care of the parrot is odd. She is short, walks funny, is a welder, has an illegible tattoo down the side of her ribs, and does not seem to be in good shape at all. When she first moved in, I thought she might be a prostitute or drug addict--she had bruises and was missing a tooth. Often, she would speak and then lose her train of thought. She was very friendly, though, and a nice person. She was very complimentary and friendly to everyone. Despite her wild nature, you could not help but like her a great deal.

She lives a few doors down from me in a house owned by an old woman who purchased it in 1975. There are two expensive homes on either side of her--one that recently sold for \$18,000,000 and another for \$14,000,000. Her house, however, is a teardown. It is rat-infested and the showers are not hooked up to the septic, instead they run (illegally) out to the sea. She has built all sorts of illegal apartments into her house (some with no views) and rents them for \$3,000 to \$6,000 a month. At least six apartments occupy one area of the house that is no more than 3,000 square feet. The people in these illegal apartments have no parking so they hunt for street parking each day.

For the longest time, I did not ask this woman any questions about herself. I only knew she is a welder from Chicago. One day my girlfriend, who is French, discovered that this girl spoke flawless French. She also speaks two other languages. The rest of the time, her Chicago accent is so strong you can barely understand her. However, when it comes to speaking French, she sounds like a native. For someone that looks so broken down and drives a beat-up truck, this made no sense.

I never asked her any personal questions because I figured it was none of my business. She lives in one of the illegal apartments with a beefy man who is a contractor. He appears to be in his mid to late 60s. I never really understood their arrangement or how they met. I figured he was just another older guy with a young girlfriend. Because of the woman's beat-up appearance, I also wondered if she and he might have some arrangement.

Last night she stopped by after taking the bird for a few hours. Before she took the bird, we were sitting on the beach and she came up to ask if she could spend some time with me. I told her she could, of course. She then said she liked my girlfriend and me because we were the only people she had met in Los Angeles who did not spend all their time talking negatively about others. I thought that was a nice thing to say--and the sort of thing I never heard. She was right: Lots of people spend a great deal of time talking negatively about others (especially in Los Angeles).

When she came into the house, something was wrong. She said that the bird was so helpful for her and explained she had been sober for almost ten years and was having a tough time. She started crying, and the bird went over to her and started kissing her. I had never heard her story before. Apparently, from the time she was ten until she was about 15 years old, her neighbor had been sexually abusing her.

She was from a large, prominent Catholic family on the Northside of Chicago, living in a lovely suburb. The neighbor was close to her parents and family. When she told her family about the abuse, instead of believing her, they accused her of lying and making the whole thing up. Her parents did not want to consider the possibility of her story being true. They took the neighbor's side. She moved out of the house, started drinking and using drugs, and began a downward spiral.

When she was 18 years old, she was home from college on a break and to attend a family wedding. She did not want to drink alcohol at the wedding because it had been causing too many issues. She looked up AA meetings and the only one she found was a men's meeting, so she went to that. She told them she did not have a lot of experience being sober, or with AA, and asked them what to do. They gave her a lot of advice she did not understand, so she did not listen. When she went to the rehearsal dinner, her whole family was drinking. She grabbed a fifth of Jack Daniels and joined people doing shots to the AC/DC song "Thunderstruck"--each time the word "Thunderstruck" occurred in the song, they had to do a shot.

She became very drunk and decided she needed drugs. So, she took the car keys to her mom's Saab and started to drive downtown to find a drug dealer. The last thing she remembers is waking up in the house of someone who had been a drug dealer at her high school a few miles away with him on top of her having sex with her. She hopped up, ran out of the house, and fell in the snow. That is the last thing she remembers.

One month later, she woke up in the hospital. Her neck and back were broken. She hit the back of her head so hard it temporarily blinded her. She did not know where she was. She was hospitalized because after falling in the snow, she got back in the car and plowed into a house at over 100 miles per hour. She was thrown from the car into the house and almost died. She required multiple reconstructive surgeries on her face. Her jaw was nearly ripped off her face in the accident. One of her eyelids was ripped off. She still cannot walk properly.

After getting out of the hospital, she became involved in the recovery community and stopped using alcohol and drugs. She sought help and started going to meetings, went to rehab, and established herself as a contractor in Chicago doing welding and other tasks. A year or so ago, a counselor she had met in a rehab center (who was twice her age) invited her to come to see him in Malibu. She thought it would be a paternalistic friendship where he would check in to see how she was doing. However, it soon became apparent that his real interest was in a physical relationship, and at the same time she thought he was

attractive. She was lonely so she started the relationship.

He had moved to Malibu because he was facing criminal charges in Chicago for having sex with underage girls who were his patients in rehab. When this came to light, he relocated to Malibu (where there are many rehab centers) and started to work here.

At first, he told her she was beautiful, wonderful, and made her feel quite unique. She became bound to him; then everything changed. The relationship turned abusive. In addition to his demented sexual needs and emotional abuse, he became physically abusive. She was working for her current boyfriend, who noticed she was coming to work with bruises and black eyes. On her final night with the abusive boyfriend, he put her head in a door and kept smashing her head as he opened and closed the door, eventually knocking out a few of her teeth in the process.

When she went to work the next day with broken teeth, her boss said this was enough. He had her move in with him, which led to a sexual relationship. She says that he saved her life and "owes him everything" for getting her out of the situation she was in. Despite living in a rat-infested apartment on the beach and doing small welding jobs, she says she is happy. She says the only relief she has from the stress she feels is that her current boyfriend is addicted to sex and has sex with her.

When she talks, she does not make eye contact because one of her eyes is sideways from the accident. When she walks, she hobbles because she still has issues with her back and spine. A lot of bad things have happened to and continue to happen to her. She is lost, and in being lost, she says the only thing that is keeping her sane is a parrot.

In this story I find so many parallels with the things I see happen to attorneys.

1. Everyone Needs to Be Supported and Feel Taken Care of, Including Your Clients and the People You Work For

The girl said she liked my girlfriend and me because we were the only people she had met in Malibu who did not gossip and talk negatively about others all the time. While there are certainly tons of people in Malibu who do not speak negatively about others, she did have a point. [Often, people like to find fault with others and point out others' weaknesses.](#) If you talk negatively about others, you also show that you will speak negatively about the person with whom you are sharing this negative information. You play for whatever team suits you at that point in time and are always willing to say negative stuff about others. This makes people not trust you when they realize they could be the victim of your criticism.

Before telling her parents about the sexual abuse, the girl was doing very well in school. She was the youngest child in a large Catholic family of six kids. By the time she was born, her parents did not have as much time for their kids. So, they were more than happy to have someone else parenting her and spending time with her. However, that person ended up being a bad person who wanted something else from her. He abused her sexually.

When she was old enough to realize this was wrong, she told her parents and they turned against her instead of supporting her. Her life went off a cliff. She started using drugs, drinking all the time, and became promiscuous. She went to an AA meeting the night of her accident and did not receive enough support, so started drinking as soon as she got home. She went looking for drugs and went to the house of a drug dealer she had not seen in a long time. She wanted to feel love but somehow started having sex instead.

The bad things that happened to her are the sort of things that happen to people when they feel like the world

and people around them do not support them. They act out, use substances to dull the pain, and their lives veer out of control. [This is one reason why we need the love and support of others.](#)

Years ago, when I was married, I was in a lawsuit against some people who had stolen a great deal of money from me in an illegal real estate transaction. After a few years of being in this lawsuit, I went to a settlement conference and invited my wife. (In a settlement conference, a hired mediator shuttles between one room and another, presenting the best part of the other side's case to each party.) I brought my wife along to support me. Instead, during the conference something happened--she agreed with the other side and liked their arguments better than my attorneys'. The case did not settle.

When I got home, she was on the phone talking to her mother in the driveway about how she believed the other side and not me. She was not pleasant to me. When it came time for the trial, she stayed home instead of going with me and supporting me. I went alone with my attorney. I did not feel supported at all. From that point on, a great deal of resentment began to build, and the marriage went downhill.

Regardless of her opinions, I needed to feel and be supported. A lack of support hurt tremendously, making me feel alone and abandoned. We need our families and others close to us to have our back. We need them to believe in us and what we can do and become. The world is filled with people who oppose us at every turn--getting support is essential.

After almost dying in an automobile accident, the girl looked for approval and support in AA and the recovery community. She got it--for a time. Then, her old counselor contacted her, and she wanted to reconnect with that relationship. She turned to her counselor and moved in with him, and it felt like good things were happening to her. She was feeling love and like she was around a father/authority figure who wanted the best for her. He made her feel supported and taken care of.

However, like many of the men in her life, he turned into someone who abused her. Then, she moved in with a much older man. The older man apparently spoke to her abuser, threatened him, and she has not heard from him since. She told us she felt a "tremendous loyalty" to the older man because he stuck up for her. Although he is more than twice her age, not wealthy, and lives in a run-down, rat-infested basement apartment, his support is incredibly meaningful because of the difficult life she has suffered. She needs someone in her corner. For that, she is willing to give herself to him and be loyal to him.

Because people have been so unkind to her throughout her life, she has made friends with a parrot, making her feel supported. The parrot does not judge and likes her. The parrot snuggles with her, and when she cries, the parrot comes up to her. The parrot also brings her positive attention from others. She takes the parrot for walks on the beach and hiking in the hills, and everyone stops and notices the parrot and says hello to the parrot. Instead of the girl with the limp and the craggy face and lots of tattoos, they see a parrot, and both are loved. She gets positive attention.

Many attorneys do not understand that the people we work for--our firms, clients, and others--really need our support. If someone makes us feel supported, we will do anything for them because very few people find good help in this world. We often do not have people who listen to us and take our side. Instead, the people around us gossip, doubt us, and send us mixed signals about what is essential. The most popular attorneys make their clients feel supported. The attorneys that law firms and employers want to keep around make their employers feel cared about and supported.

Very few people ever have our back. Most people are out for themselves. My ex-wife cared more about taking the other side in my litigation than supporting me. The girl's parents were more concerned with the optics of having a daughter sexually abused by their friend than their daughter's wellbeing. Instead of finding support, the girl has found many men in her life who did the opposite. Today, she is huddled in a small

basement apartment with a man more than twice her age solely because he supported her. In return for this support, she gives him her loyalty and everything else she has to offer.

Many attorneys I know who have divorced did so when they had a setback in their careers. They may have lost their job or had other problems. Instead of supporting them and standing behind them, their wives abandoned them when things went south. Men do the same for their wives. When they are young and beautiful, they dote on them, and then when they get older and not as attractive, they no longer support them and ditch them for a younger version. To prevent this, the wives get plastic surgery, botox, and do everything in their power to try and look as good as they can for as long as they can. They want to be loved. Everyone wants to feel loved and supported. When this love and support disappears, we experience the worst issues in our lives.

When we do not feel supported and taken care of--by society, our family, and others--we feel a lot of pain. That is the source of much of the problem in the world. It is the source of our client's pain, the pain that the people we work for the inside of law firms feel.

If you are going to be happy, you need to support those around you. You need to be there and have peoples' backs. You need to show others that you are there for them. You also need to realize that people will not always be there for you.

My best interactions with attorneys, accountants, and others have always been when they supported me. When the people working for me were genuinely looking out for my best interests and got involved and took my side, I would do anything for them. My longest-running friendships have been with the people I supported and vice-versa. One of the most fundamental human needs is to feel supported. Without that, our lives go to hell. Without support from our significant others, we feel very much alone. When children do not feel supported, they rebel and have issues.

The most successful attorneys make their clients feel supported and have their backs. The most successful people in most companies and law firms make their employers feel supported and have their backs. My best and longest-running employees have made me feel supported and have my back.

The second someone feels like you do not support them and have their back, they are apt to not like you or want to advance you. If your firm thinks you have negative opinions about them, they will try to get rid of you. If attorneys feel that you think negatively of them, they will not work with you. If your staff does not think you have their back, they will not support you and perhaps look for new jobs. People want to feel supported, understood, and taken care of.

See Also:

[Lawyer Depression and Anxiety: Why Most Lawyers are Depressed and Anxious Due to Practicing Law You Will Succeed in Your Job and Job Search When You Are Concerned with Giving and Not Taking Are You Motivated by Power, Relationships, or Achievement?](#)

2. Bad People Pray on Your Need to Feel Supported, Taken Care of, and Acknowledged

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the girl's story is what happened due to her fundamental need to feel cared for. She was sexually abused by a caregiver who appeared when her parents were absent. She came out to Malibu seeking support from a man who had been her counselor in rehab and made her feel supported there. He, too, abused her. Now, she is in a relationship with a much older man who makes her feel supported. Because of her need to feel supported and cared for, she has been abused and hurt repeatedly.

When we need to feel taken care of and supported, we are vulnerable to others. People can take advantage of this need in all sorts of ways.

At the outset, I should note that many people in this world are evil. There are always people waiting in the wings to scam us, take advantage of us, and hurt us. Some employers are evil. Some clients are evil. Evil people use our need for love and support against us and take advantage of our need for support.

What is so tragic about this girl's story is what happened to her because she needed love and acknowledgement. There were drug dealers, rapists, child molesters, and countless others waiting in the wings to take advantage of her and hurt her because she was weak. When she was drunk and went to the drug dealer's house, she was weak and passed out and was raped. All over, evil people are waiting who will do wrong things to hurt us and take advantage of us at every turn.

In my divorce, I watched as attorneys on both sides did their best to run up the bill by inflaming tensions, not settling the case, creating issues where there were none, and more. They did this because they wanted my wife to feel she would be supported and cared for, and because they wanted me to feel protected. In reality, the issues were straightforward. There was no need for ongoing litigation. Still, [the attorneys were able to run up huge bills on both sides](#) by exploiting our need to feel supported and cared for. This is something bad people do. Bad people hurt others--and attorneys are no exception.

My girlfriend used to work in a rehab center in Malibu after college as a counselor. She said the rehab center would charge \$60,000 a month, and their objective was to keep people there as long as possible. People having severe issues, at the end of their rope, would check into the rehab center. Although they did participate in groups and counseling each day, the entire program was set up so that people in the first 30 days were being sold on the next 30 days there, then another 30 days after that, and so on until eventually being sold time in a half-way house.

The program is set up to get as much money as possible out of people. Everyone in the center was trained to sell people on going for longer and longer periods. It is an example of preying on weakness. People in the rehab centers are cooked for, listened to, cleaned up after, and they feel supported and acknowledged. This need for support takes everything from them at a point when they are at their weakest.

In your career, the people you work with will prey on your need to feel supported and cared for. Many attorneys work hard to get recognition, [do well in school](#), and get good jobs because they want to be loved. They believe accomplishment will help them feel supported and taken care of. They work long hours, sacrifice the best years of their lives in offices under fluorescent lights, often working all night--all to get positive feedback from their employers in order to look like someone important to the outside world and get the love of society and the people close to them. Many of the hardest-working people have holes in them that need to be filled with support and love. For this reason, many employers often get the best of us. It is the support of others that makes the most significant difference to us.

If we have [a mentor or someone who believes in us](#) inside a law firm, we are more likely to do well and succeed. A mentor guides us, looks out for us, and sees the best in us. However, very few people have this. Most people do not get this and do not feel supported, so they become antagonistic towards their employers. Without people who believe in them, they are more likely to be unhappy and look for new jobs or different environments. Organizations attract us by making us think we will be supported and taken care of, but we often do not find this.

Because we need to feel supported and cared for, we are vulnerable to people who look like they can do this for us.

Employers sometimes make us feel like we are part of a team and supported, which enables them to pay us much less than we are worth or make us work harder. [When I speak with many successful partners, I am amazed at how many are underpaid.](#) I have seen partners paid \$300,000 a year when they should be making over \$1,000,000. I have seen associates underpaid in law firms all over the country, and they allow this tradeoff because the employer makes them feel supported. It is going on all over--and it is worse in some places than others. It is common for many small law firms to have people working at drastically lower salaries than they should be.

[Religions](#) often take advantage of our need to feel supported, taken care of, and acknowledged. If they can, many religions take every bit of money we have and do not care if we were living in poverty. Many groups only acknowledge us if we give them large sums of money. People join gangs, commit crimes, and do all sorts of things to feel supported and accepted.

You will be taken advantage of by others in direct proportion to your need to feel supported and acknowledged. If you do not have your wits about you, this often continues indefinitely. Many of your actions in the world are guided by a deep-seated need to feel unique and special.

I know of some attorneys who like to move law firms every year or two--and have done so throughout their careers. These attorneys love the process where they start working with a recruiter and the recruiter flatters them. The recruiter then tells them about potential firms. The attorney gets interviews, feels acknowledged and memorable, and moves to a new firm--then repeats the process when they no longer feel the love. I do not work with these attorneys, but other recruiters do. These other [recruiters](#) know that they are vulnerable, and even if it is not in the attorneys' best interest to move, they know the attorney is addicted to the process of moving and will do so if prodded.

I used to get a call and text from a car salesman about once a year. He always wanted me to trade in my car for a new model. He would ask about my family and make me feel good about myself. Invariably he would ask me if I wanted to look at some new model cars that have recently come out. I might be coy for a text or two, but then I would go see him, look at some vehicles, and trade one in. I would lose thousands of dollars because I would be trading in a car. But it made me feel good looking at new cars, getting something new and feeling important. I am not alone--people do this with clothes, golf clubs, and all sorts of things. We like it when people make us feel acknowledged, but in my case, this was not healthy--spending more money than I should have was dumb.

The weaker you are, the more vulnerable you are, and the more likely are to be taken advantage of. Being taken advantage of because of your weakness is something everyone needs to be mindful of. When you are weak, others can hurt you, and you need to be careful. Our instinct says that people would not take advantage of the weak, but in reality, the opposite is true. When you are most vulnerable, you are most likely to be taken advantage of and used.

Conclusions

If someone does not [make us feel important](#), we do not feel good about ourselves. [It breaks our confidence.](#) It hurts our self-esteem. We question if we are good at something. We are not always motivated to do our best. We often rebel against the people who made us feel unimportant.

When the girl's parents [refused to believe](#) that her neighbor was sexually abusing her, she went from being a good athlete and an incredibly gifted student to the opposite. She surrounded herself with people who abused alcohol and drugs, and that became her life. She rebelled and tried to block everything out. She surrounded herself with people who felt like she did inside. These people were not good for her, and it ultimately did a ton of damage. She needed support and did not get it. Because her need for approval was so strong, she was willing to be with people who abused and took advantage of her.

When we do not feel supported by our employers and others around us, the same thing always happens. We avoid the people who made us feel bad about ourselves. We try and avoid the people who make us feel bad. We may be critical of the people who do not make us feel important--like our employers--and talk negatively about them or undermine them. The people I have had the most issues with were with people I made feel unimportant.

To be good at your job, you need to make others feel important and taken care of. You need to do this with clients, and you need to do it with the people you work for. I believe that the better you do this, the more successful you will become. Most clients are like us, they need advocates and people who stick up for us.

I started writing this article because I was thinking about legal placement and working with a new group of recruiters who just joined our firm. I talked with them about the importance of making a connection with their candidates and taking their side. I explained how hard it is to be an attorney and how so many attorneys out there feel like they do not have advocates or people who care about them. I explained that when you listen to people and take their side and understand them, you are doing an excellent job in legal placement. The best recruiters can take their candidate's side and be their advocate. The worst recruiters make everything about themselves and their needs.

I asked one recruiter how he would feel if his wife was critical of him all the time and did not say positive things to him. He told me he would get depressed, avoid her, be angry, find fault with her, and not like her anymore. That is what people do with us when we are not positive with them.

Then, the next day after my discussion with these recruiters, the girl walked into my house with my parrot and started telling me her story.

If you are going to be happy in this life, [you need to find people and employers who support you](#). You need to realize that you are vulnerable to people who will falsely flatter you and take advantage of your need to feel supported. You also need, most importantly, [to make others feel supported and build them up](#). This is how you get people to want to help you. This is how you get clients to be loyal to you, and this is the real way to be successful and have a good life. You should seek first to advocate for others, then they will advocate for you.

See Also:

[Life Supports What Supports Life](#)

[Helpers and Non-Helpers](#)

[You Will Succeed in Your Job and Job Search When You Are Concerned with Giving and Not Taking](#)
[Surround Yourself with Positive People](#)