

LAW 10: Infection: Avoid the Unhappy and Unlucky

Law 10 of *The 48 Laws of Power* warns against the dangers of associating with individuals who are chronically unlucky or consumed by negativity. Misfortune and unhappiness often spread like a contagion, affecting those who remain in close proximity to such individuals. Rather than trying to rescue or reform them, it is wiser to distance oneself and instead align with those who bring value, optimism, and stability.

A striking example of this law in action is the story of Lola Montez, a 19th-century courtesan whose chaotic personal life wreaked havoc on the powerful men she became involved with. Her relationship with King Ludwig of Bavaria led to public scandal, political unrest, and ultimately the king's abdication, demonstrating how one individual's turbulence can ripple outward and destroy those who become too closely entangled. Similarly, Alexandre Dujarier, a wealthy newspaper owner, suffered a tragic downfall after becoming involved with Montez, reinforcing the idea that some individuals carry an aura of misfortune that infects those around them.

This law is not about cruelty or callousness but rather an understanding of how negative energy can be just as influential as positive energy. Those who are habitually surrounded by turmoil, failure, or emotional instability tend to bring those same conditions into the lives of others. While empathy is a valuable trait, allowing another person's perpetual misfortune to infiltrate your life can lead to financial, emotional, and even reputational damage.

Greene advises that one of the best ways to safeguard success is to be highly selective about whom one associates with. People who frequently experience instability in their careers, relationships, or financial situations often create an environment where those around them suffer similar consequences. Even when their misfortunes seem unintentional, their patterns of behavior make it likely that they will continue to spiral downward, bringing others with them.

Psychologists refer to this as emotional contagion—the phenomenon where people adopt the moods, attitudes, and even thought patterns of those they spend the most time with. Just as negativity can spread and diminish a person's ability to thrive, surrounding oneself with positive, successful, and emotionally stable individuals can have the opposite effect. By choosing to associate with those who exude confidence, success, and stability, one can elevate their own potential and avoid unnecessary obstacles.

The law does not suggest that one should abandon those who experience temporary misfortune, as setbacks are a natural part of life. Instead, it warns against aligning too closely with those who are perpetually mired in crisis, unable to take control of their circumstances. Recognizing the difference between someone facing a temporary setback and someone who repeatedly invites chaos into their life is crucial in making wise decisions about whom to keep in your inner circle.

In professional settings, this law holds particular significance. Businesses that consistently fail, colleagues who always seem to be in the middle of workplace drama, or partners who bring more problems than solutions can drag even the most competent individuals down with them. By carefully evaluating associations and maintaining distance from those who create unnecessary turmoil, one can preserve their own reputation, focus, and success.

History repeatedly shows that those who attach themselves to failing ventures, unstable leaders, or reckless individuals often share their fate. Political figures who align with controversial or self-destructive allies frequently find themselves tainted by association. In contrast, those who form relationships with mentors,

collaborators, and partners who are disciplined, forward-thinking, and successful often find that these connections propel them to greater heights.

Ultimately, Law 10 underscores that power is not just about strength or strategy but also about environment and influence. By surrounding oneself with people who uplift, challenge, and inspire, an individual can ensure continuous personal and professional growth. The key takeaway is clear: be mindful of the company you keep, because the energy, habits, and attitudes of those around you will shape your future.