



Rebuilding Trust

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NORTHSTAR COMPASS

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THE VALUE OF TRUST

The significance of being able to trust those you love and live with cannot be overstated. For decades, psychologists have recognized human connection is inescapably assembled on a sturdy foundation of trust. In Erickson's stages of development, trust vs. mistrust is the first and primary issue to be resolved in order to navigate the subsequent phases of development and life. Trust allows us to guess what is next, predicting someone's actions or attitudes in the future. Like the never-failing regularity of the morning's sunrise, predictability brings comfort and security to the soul. Trust is certainty, assurance, and the necessary first step to confidently interact in relationships.

WHEN TRUST IS SHATTERED

Belief and faith in others is challenging to build and can be almost effortlessly reduced to rubble. If we think of trust as a track record of one's usual conduct, we do well to remember it takes longer to establish a track record than it does to spoil it. Consider this example: To design and craft a fine piece might take 60 hours. Exposure to flames for 60 seconds would cause extensive damage to the , and 60 minutes exposure would leave only an ash heap. Likewise, years of cultivating relational confidence can be

dreadfully damaged in a thoughtless moment of indiscretion or a few acts tainted by poor judgment.

TRUST IS NOT AN “ALL OR NOTHING” CONCEPT

We often use the word “trust” as though it is utterly absent or complete and freely given. The reality is that trust is not on or off, all or nothing. The concept of trust is better understood as a continuum, not two extremes. Most people can be trusted some of the time. They can be trusted in a number of situations, but not in all. It is only when you have trusted them with little things and they have proven true that you would venture to trust them with more. You can make a general determination of someone’s trustworthiness and then decide if you should back off or develop deeper trust in the. In a similar way, by proving yourself trustworthy, others will be able to rely on and trust you more deeply.

TRUST VS. FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is an important part of repairing and rebuilding a working relationship. If you have been injured,

it is right, important, and helpful to forgive those who have offended you. Forgiveness is a simple concept: if someone owes you \$10 and you forgive the debt, she no longer owes you anything. However, even though you have forgiven her, you may not trust her. Forgiveness lies with the offended party. Rebuilding trust primarily lies with the offender.

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL SAFE?

Empathy: The ability to care about others and to have their personal welfare in mind helps you understand how your actions affect others.

Transparency: Self-reflection enables you to know yourself candidly and reveal yourself accurately.

Integrity: Honestly living without secrets, deception, or dishonesty rapidly builds security in your relationships.

Consistency: Loving others with steadiness and consistency creates stability. Building trust requires honesty in communication and integrity in your behavior—say what you will do, then do what you say.

WHY BOTHER REBUILDING TRUST?

- Without trust, a relationship cannot thrive.
- Once trust is re-established, the relationship is often stronger than it was before.
- Working through difficulties can improve communication and solidify your commitment, making the relationship even more valuable and important to you.
- Those with long-term, consistent, loving relationships in their life tend to have better health and are happier.
- Dissolving relationships causes considerable emotional hardship and distress.
- Unresolved issues will affect future relationships.

WHAT CAN I DO?

1. Commit yourself to restoration. In rebuilding a mutual relationship, both people must be willing and at least somewhat cooperative. Keep in mind that commitment levels and motivations will inevitably be different. Be trustworthy yourself. This makes it easier for others to live with integrity.
2. Admit your wrongdoing. Restoring trust requires full repentance for the wrongs committed and full acceptance of all apologies.
3. Forgive the one who has offended you. Remember, forgiveness lies with the offended party and rebuilding trust lies primarily with the one who committed the hurt.
4. Establish accountability. Find someone to whom you can be accountable.
5. Talk through new difficulties. Once you start rebuilding your relationships, keep short accounts with one another. Don't let things build up and blow up.
6. Focus on improvement. Look for growth, change, and improvement in the other person, rather than looking for mistakes, slips, violations, and set-backs. Love keeps no record of wrongs, but wants to cover over failures and overlook faults.
7. Be encouraging. Affirm and encourage the one who is trying to rebuild a damaged relationship. Commit yourself to restoration and reconciliation. Communicate about efforts they are making without fault-finding.
8. Mind your attitudes and your behavior. Trust is re-established by how you treat others in public and conduct yourself in private.
9. Don't interrogate or ask for details about past offenses. This generally produces blame-shifting, denial, cover-up, and defensiveness. Be content with an outline of offenses and don't attempt to fill in all the blanks.
10. Seek help. If you get stuck in this complicated rebuilding process, seek additional help or counsel. A third party can help talk through difficult issues without overreacting or attacking the other person. Bitterness is toxic and can be as deadly as the offense itself. If resentment lingers, get some help. Do not get talked into thinking that the situation you face is too hard, too big, or too damaged. Imperfect people living with imperfect people cannot reasonably expect perfect relationships. But they can expect to make great strides in rebuilding trust.



DON'T LIE TO ME!

“Nearly everyone will lie to you given the right circumstances.” ~Bill Clinton

Most people care about the truth, desire to be honest, and would say lying is wrong. They also genuinely yearn for acceptance and approval. When those two values collide—forcing someone to pick honesty or approval—most people in our American culture will surrender integrity and forfeit the truth in order to retain approval. When friends told me their teenage son had a problem with lying, I speculated he also struggled with an approval problem. This young man longed for the affection of his parents and was afraid of rejection. He would repeatedly sacrifice honesty in a second-rate effort to prevent further loss of his parents admiration. To address a similar problem in your family, intentionally attend to his or her wish to be esteemed, appreciated, and aware of your love and affections.

“When in doubt, tell the truth.” ~Mark Twain.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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He received his Master's Degree from Wheaton Graduate School, his Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD) from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and his Certificate in Co-Occurring Disorders from Adler Graduate School. He serves frequently as a seminar leader, and has taught workshops in the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and India.

He is the author of *Journeys* and *Destinations*, two books on co-occurring disorders treatment, and the co-author of *Finding Hope Again: Overcoming Depression* with Dr. Neil T. Anderson.

This information in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional help or to be used as a diagnostic tool. If you have serious difficulties with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, please seek professional help.