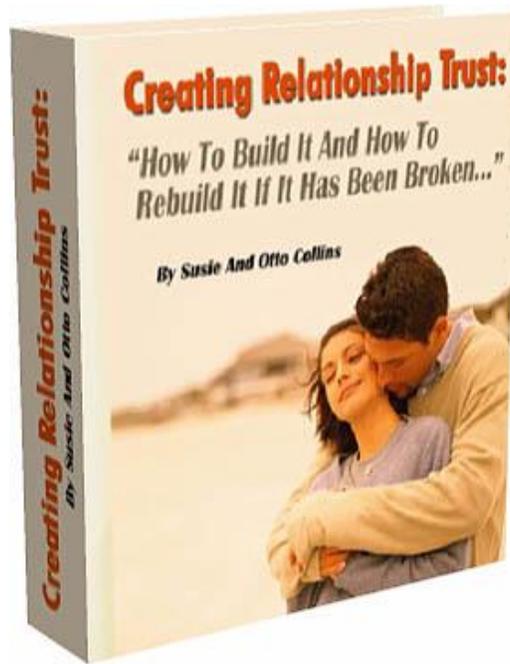


Creating Relationship Trust



By Susie and Otto Collins

With Contributions from Other Relationship Experts

<https://susieandotto.com>

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Foreword

By Dr. Reena Sommer

There is a saying...

“You don’t really appreciate something until it’s gone!”

When it comes to trust, nothing could be truer. The reality is that trust in relationships is something that is usually assumed, taken for granted and unquestioned. That is - until it is broken. And once it has been, trust can be very difficult to re-establish.

Just stop for a moment and think about the close relationships you’ve had. If you are like most people, trusting others you are close to is probably something you generally don’t give much thought to. In fact, when it comes to those we care most about, most of us tend to trust that they will be honest, forthcoming and act in good faith. In other words, our trust in others is implicit.

On the other hand, if you’ve had the unfortunate experience of losing trust in someone important to you, then you know the pain and devastation that accompany being betrayed, lied to and deceived. You also know how difficult it is to re-establish that sense of trust you once had and took for granted.

The task of being able to trust again is difficult and challenging - mainly because the resulting doubt, cautiousness and emotional guardedness are often not just limited to the relationship in question. Instead, the fallout of a broken trust can affect all important relationships and alter people’s perceptions of intimacy, reciprocity and sharing between people. The task of regaining trust requires patience, commitment and faith –in oneself and in the guidance that comes from beyond.

* * * * *

Susie and Otto Collins' book, "Creating Relationship Trust" tackles the very important yet difficult subject of trust in relationships. They have gathered the writings of experienced relationship experts who together confront the issues that are most relevant in understanding the dynamics of creating a trusting relationship as well as the challenges associated with rebuilding it once it has been broken.

I have no doubt that Otto and Susie Collins will make a significant contribution to the literature on relationships by taking this bold step in writing "Creating Relationship Trust". I am also certain that the diversity in the messages provided by each of the book's contributors will leave every reader with a much greater understanding of what needs to be done in order to protect and preserve the most precious entity of trust in their relationships.

I invite you to read this book in whatever way makes most sense to you. Start at the beginning and read straight through or focus on the sections that have most meaning to you. What ever way you choose, I can assure you that you will gain tremendously from reading it.

About the Author:

Dr. Reena Sommer is an internationally recognized relationship and divorce consultant, writer and educator. She has a private consulting practice in Winnipeg, Canada and provides telephone consultations to clients across the U.S., Canada and as far away as India. You can visit her main website at <http://www.reenasommerassociates.mb.ca>

For more information about Dr. Sommer's newly revised e-Book, "The Anatomy of An Affair" [click here](#).

Introduction

By Susie & Otto Collins

If trust is an issue for you in your relationships and in your life, we don't have to tell you how painful living with this issue can be.

Trust is the one quality that a relationship simply can't survive without. If you don't have trust, then you'll put a question mark in front of everything your partner says. You'll doubt their love. You'll harbor unhealed resentments.

If you don't trust your partner, sex will be just going through the motions with little or no emotional connection. In short, if trust is an issue in your relationship, no matter how hard you try, you'll keep your partner at a distance and not let them get too close to you.

Sometimes people who have "trust issues" tell us things like... "I don't know why I feel this way because my husband doesn't do anything to deserve my mistrust," "I've been burned in past relationships and it's hard for me to trust anyone now," "Everyone cheats. How can I trust that anyone will be true to me?" and finally "I don't know how to deal with her lies anymore."

On the other hand, if trust is high in your relationships, there's no limit to how good relationships can be. If you have trust, there's an ease and flow in the relationship. When you have trust, you have love, peace, joy, harmony and connection. You also have a relationship that is full of possibilities.

No One is Born with Trust Issues

What we've discovered is that no one is born with "trust issues." They are created from real or imagined fears about what may or may not be happening in their relationships.

If there are trust issues, one or both of the following explanations are usually underneath them:

1. The person is in a relationship with someone who has violated trust in some way and maybe even continues to violate it.
2. The person has had trust violated in past relationships and has created real fears in the present moment about events and circumstances that may or may not be happening in their current relationship.

The paradox of “trust issues” is that in order to heal trust, you have to be willing to open your heart and take conscious, intelligent risk. Most people who struggle with this issue have felt pain that is so great that they have shut themselves off from opening their hearts again. It’s very difficult for them to move past this point.

Our Intention

Our intention in writing this book is to share with you ways to move you from where you are into trusting not only others but yourself. As we see it, learning to trust yourself is the first step in learning to trust other people.

When you’re able to let go of mistrust and open to possibilities, you’ll be on your way to deeper, more connected and more fulfilling relationships as well as a better life, free of constant drama, fear and anxiety.

Whether your mistrust is warranted or not, it’s up to you to begin the healing process within yourself and take the steps to create the life you want.

In this book, in addition to sharing our knowledge and experiences, we’ve included information from other relationship coaches, therapists, counselors, teachers and authors. Some of these contributors you may have heard of and others not. They each bring valuable viewpoints and offer many concepts and concrete suggestions for healing, for moving past trust issues and for starting to create the kind of relationships that you really want.

It is our intention that the information in this book will give you the knowledge, courage, strength and feeling of possibility that you too can heal this issue in your life.

Your Role and Responsibility

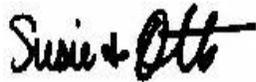
It has been our experience that our clients who commit to openness to learning and to putting into action the ideas presented actually succeed in making the changes that they want in their lives.

If this information is to have a lasting impact on your life, we suggest that you make a commitment to being open to doing whatever is necessary to heal the issues surrounding trust in your relationships.

This may not be easy because it will require risk and effort on your part. If you are willing to stand in your truth, honestly look at your situation as it really is, accept and acknowledge your part in your relationship challenges, are willing to let go of the past, and live in the present moment, anything is possible—even building and rebuilding trust.

We are honored to offer this information from us and from others that will help you in this process.

Susie & Otto Collins, Relationship Coaches and Authors



An Overview of Trust

Understanding, Building, and Repairing Trust

by Megan & Bob Tschannen-Moran

LifeTrek Coaching International

<http://www.LifeTrekCoaching.com>

We have spent many years studying, researching, and exploring the concept of trust. Megan Tschannen-Moran made trust the focus of her Ph.D. dissertation at The Ohio State University in 1998. Since then she has published many scholarly articles and an extensive book on the subject. Although her book, "Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools" (Jossey-Bass, 2004), focuses on the impact of trust in the context of schools, it provides a model for understanding, building, and repairing trust that is broadly useful and widely appreciated.

Understanding Trust

Understanding trust can be difficult because trust is hard to define. It's been said that trust is like air: we only notice it when it becomes polluted or scarce. In other words, we know when we have a trust problem, we feel it in our bones, but we don't always know how to recognize and explain trust when it exists. A good working definition of trust is important; it assists us to both build trust and to repair trust when it has been broken.

Megan's definition of trust is simple and comprehensive. "Trust," she writes, "is the willingness to be vulnerable based on one's confidence in the other party's benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence." These ingredients apply in all manner of contexts and human relationships, although different contexts may suggest different emphases and nuances. Understanding and applying these ingredients enable us to do a better job at building and repairing trust.

Vulnerability is central to the definition of trust. If there is no vulnerability, then trust becomes irrelevant. If there is vulnerability – as there is in any

situation of interdependence where the goals of one cannot be accomplished without the contribution of another -- then trust becomes paramount. It fosters a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of desired goals.

We base our trust on the assessment of the other party's benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence.

- *Benevolence* means we believe they have our best interest at heart. They are not out to get us. On the contrary, they are out to give us what we need in the pursuit of desired goals. Although the particulars of what we need may not be specified, we can count on their good will. These people are on our side.
- *Honesty* means we believe what they tell us. They have integrity and authenticity. This is a critical ingredient to trust: that a person's actions align with their words and that their words align with reality. Trustworthy people say what they mean and mean what they say. We can count on them to tell the truth.
- *Openness* means we believe they have nothing to hide. They may have healthy boundaries, but they also have healthy transparency. We are not fearful that they are hiding important information. There are no hidden agendas. When they have information, they share it with appropriate people. People who play their cards close to their chest provoke suspicion.
- *Reliability* means we can count on people to do what they say they are going to do. They not only talk the talk, they also walk the walk. Of course, some people can be reliably unreliable ("Oh, she's always late"). But this does not inspire trust. Trust grows from positive reliability. We don't have to invest energy making alternate plans in case they let us down.
- *Competence* means we believe they can carry their weight. They have the right stuff, the right knowledge and skills to provide for what is needed. They have not oversold their abilities for personal gain.

When these five facets of trust are in place, trust functions paradoxically as both a lubricant and a glue. It is a social lubricant in that it contributes to the smooth functioning of a relationship, family, group, or organization. People do not have to expend energy monitoring the behavior and speculating on the motivations of others; they can therefore invest their energy in better ways.

Trust is also the glue that can hold people together through good times and bad. Whether it's a couple or a work team, trust binds people together through a commitment of caring. People not only care for what needs to be done, they also care for the wellbeing of everyone involved.

Building Trust

If we hope to build trust with another person or in an organizational context, then it's important to practice trustworthy behavior. That may appear obvious, but each word adds a critical dimension for building trust.

- *Practice.* Trustworthy behavior needs to become a practice and it also takes practice. We don't just stumble upon trustworthy behavior. When we establish patterns, habits, rituals, and conventions based upon our core values and overarching vision of life, those around us have the opportunity to develop a deepening sense of trust over time. By consistently practicing trustworthy behavior so that people feel they can predict our behavior, we both strengthen our performance and win the confidence of others.
- *Trustworthy.* Behavior that is worthy of trust balances a concern for what needs to get done (task) with a concern for the people involved (relationship). It balances support and challenge. It avoids micromanaging, ostensibly to improve quality. Being overly focused on controls, rules, and procedures can actually undermine the development of trust. Trust gives people the room to make and learn from their own mistakes. Honest self-appraisal of one's own benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence can produce trust-enhancing, self-development action plans.

- *Behavior.* When it comes to building trust, actions speak much louder than words. Agreements and understandings can, in fact, do more harm than good if they lead us to over promise and under deliver. When this happens, we fall short in terms of both reliability and honesty. Better to under promise and over deliver in order to make our behavior as consistent as possible with our words.

Repairing Trust

Repairing trust is an arduous process, with no guarantee of success. Each party must perceive that the short-term and/or long-term benefits to be derived from the relationship are highly valued enough to be worth the investment of time and energy required to repair the damage. But if two parties seek to repair trust, the five-facet model can point them in the right direction. The specific issues that have damaged trust have to be identified and dealt with, agreements have to be made, and people have to renew their commitment to practice trustworthy behavior over time.

Situations inevitably arise when something we care for is harmed, even if by accident. But when our vulnerability is exploited out of selfishness or mean-spiritedness, we feel betrayed.

The nature of a trusting relationship can be altered instantaneously with a simple comment, a betrayed confidence, or a decision that violates the sense of care one has expected of another. When a violation occurs trust is often shattered, leaving distrust in its place.

The stage is set for betrayal when one party to a trusting relationship experiences sufficient dissatisfaction with the current situation to begin to entertain alternatives that will expose the trust partner to potential harm. Thus there is a drop in benevolence. The betrayer then seeks an alternative set of principles to justify, at least to themselves, the proposed action. Thus there is a drop in integrity.

Fantasizing or planning a betrayal does not, in and of itself, constitute one. Action, even if the victim never learns of it and even if no harm actually

befalls them as a result, kicks off the cycle of betrayal. The perpetrator is likely to want to hide what has happened from the victim in order to continue to reap whatever goods they receive from the relationship. Thus there is a loss in openness. In an intimate relationship, it is this lack of openness that can be most damaging to the relationship in the long run because the perpetrator can never again be fully at ease, never again fully present to the victim. He or she must always be on guard as long as the secret remains.

Learning of a betrayal can leave the victim feeling stunned and confused, and with a sense of unreality. Upon reflection, those feelings turn to anger and the motivation to seek revenge. Revenge is not always a bad thing. In the context of organizational life, revenge can act as a constraint against the abuse of power and injustice. It can also be the act that settles the score, thereby opening the door to new possibilities for the repair of trust.

More often than not, however, revenge sparks a downward spiral and a self-perpetuating cycle of feuding. Until the victim of a betrayal is willing to confront their betrayer directly and negotiate new terms and conditions for their relationship, repair of trust is unlikely. The violator can also make the repair of trust impossible if he or she refuses to recognize and acknowledge that a violation has occurred.

The victim and the violator have different roles in the repair of trust. The victim speaks the truth of his or her experience while the violator listens carefully and then engages sincerely in the "four A's of absolution" – admit it, apologize, ask forgiveness, and amend your ways.

- **Admit It:** To begin with, the violator acknowledges that a violation has occurred and that harm was done. Listening carefully to the victim is a sign of respect and signals a willingness to engage in a process of rebuilding the relationship. To dismiss the harm as insignificant is disrespectful to the experience of the victim and the risk the victim may have experienced in arranging the confrontation. The violator accepts responsibility for the effects of his or her actions. The violator admits to having caused the event and also admits that it was

destructive. Even if the harm was unintentional, the violator needs to acknowledge that the way events unfolded and in the experience of the victim, harm was done.

- **Apologize:** To apologize is to not only admit that harm was done and that one's actions contributed to that harm, but to express regret for one's behavior. Trust is enhanced by a willingness to apologize for the unpleasant consequences of one's actions. An apology can, in some cases, be sufficient to restore the relationship because in admitting wrong there is an implicit understanding that one wants to redeem himself or herself and will endeavor to avoid repeating the error in the future. But the violator should not assume that the apology erases the error for which it has been issued. To rush too readily to the conclusion that all is now well violates the sense of care that undergirds the trusting relationship, and the sense that one will take the needs and desires of the other seriously.
- **Ask Forgiveness:** If trust is to be repaired, some form of forgiveness is required. Forgiveness can be transformative, but it may not be easy to achieve. Forgiveness is a process in which the victim reaches out to the betrayer and expresses a willingness to become vulnerable once again. Forgiveness is not simply a state of mind; it is an action – or a sequence of actions – and a ritualized undoing of the act of betrayal. Forgiveness can be facilitated when the violator makes an explicit request to be forgiven. It's not enough to just start acting as if nothing ever happened or nothing is wrong. Such implicit forgiveness is open to misinterpretation and may constitute an offense in its own right. Forgiveness takes an explicit verbal act, saying some form of "I forgive you" or "Forget It." It does not mean the offense is forgotten, but it does open the door for repairing trust.
- **Amend Your Ways:** It is the victim who determines what is required to restore trust. This often entails specifying acts of reparation designed to demonstrate that the violator is sincere and committed to rebuilding the relationship, including the willingness to incur a certain amount of personal loss in doing so. The acts of reparation set by the victim may seem in the eyes of the violator to be either reasonable or unreasonable, resulting in either a willingness or unwillingness to meet

them. If undertaken, the victim then has the opportunity to judge the sincerity and commitment of the violator as he or she carries out these actions. Reparation also creates an opportunity for the violator to work out any guilt that he or she may have over the harm that was done, whether it was intentional or unintentional. Should the victim refuse to extend forgiveness under any circumstances, continuing in an interdependent relationship is likely to be fraught with tension, poor communication, and lower productivity.

Once the "four A's of absolution" have been negotiated, the reparations have been paid, and trustworthy behavior has been practiced consistently over time, it becomes possible once again to reestablish an atmosphere of trust. Good intentions are not enough. Through the steadfast demonstration of benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence people become once again willing to make themselves vulnerable.

About the Authors:

Dr. Megan and Bob Tschannen-Moran own and operate LifeTrek Coaching International, a full-service life coaching company with a staff of six trained professionals. You can visit them on the Web at <http://www.LifeTrekCoaching.com> or write Coach@LifeTrekCoaching.com.

Megan is also an Assistant Professor in Educational Leadership at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA. Megan received her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University and her Masters and Ph.D. degrees in educational administration from The Ohio State University. Her research interests include trust in organizational contexts, social psychology, and social cognitive theory.

Bob, the President of LifeTrek Coaching, received an undergraduate degree from Northwestern University, a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, and coach training from both Coach U and the Graduate School of Coaching. Before founding LifeTrek in 1998, Bob served as a Protestant minister for 20 years. Through LifeTrek Coaching, Bob has developed his interest and experience in a wide variety of disciplines, including health and wellness, career and vocation, life / work energy, and relationship building. In addition to serving as a mentor coach to aspiring coaches, Bob has coached couples, business executives and directors, medical doctors, educational leaders, local pastors, and many others to be more successful and fulfilled in their life and work.

Trust Building Secrets

Chapter 1

Learn to Trust Yourself

by Susie & Otto Collins

When people ask us “How do you learn to trust another person?” they are often surprised by our answer when we tell them that in order to trust someone else, you have to first learn to trust yourself.

The reason that they are surprised by this answer is that in relationships where trust is an issue, most people want to place all the responsibility for the mistrust on the other person. They base their trust and happiness on how someone else acts towards them without looking at what’s going on inside them.

We've discovered that trust in a relationship doesn't start with someone else. It starts with you.

In order to have real, genuine trust, you have to first learn to trust yourself.

So, what does it mean to “trust yourself?” And why is this important?

When we think about what it means to trust ourselves, we know it’s about feeling capable of recognizing and meeting our own needs. It’s about knowing that we know what we want and what we don’t want in our lives. It’s about knowing how and when to set loving boundaries and sticking to them. It’s having the confidence that we are making the best possible decisions for our highest good. It’s believing that we can act in our own best self interest, as well as being loving with the people in our lives.

This is important because it is only when we are able to trust ourselves in these ways that we are able to open to trusting other people and letting them in. When we have the confidence in our own ability to act in our own self interest, we know that we can create healthy boundaries that are strong and at the same time permeable enough to let another person in. When we have this confidence, if someone violates our trust or breaks an agreement, we are able to tell that person how we are feeling and work toward a healthy resolution instead of tearing the relationship apart.

An Example of Learning to Trust Ourselves in Action

Marie was having trust issues with her partner because he wasn't treating her with the kindness and respect that she thought that a person would give to another who claimed to love them. When her partner would say something that she thought was offensive and hurtful, instead of sharing with him how his comments affected her, she would either withdraw or retaliate in an unhealthy way.

For example, Jim had a tendency when they were in public to look intently at other women and comment on their beauty. Marie told us that when this happened, she felt ugly, jealous of those other women, and that Jim didn't love her.

As we continued to talk with Marie, we realized that one of her biggest problems was that she didn't have a conscious awareness of how she wanted her relationship with Jim to be. She also didn't know for sure what "love" meant to each of them and had never told Jim how she wanted to be treated by him. She didn't trust in herself enough to set healthy boundaries with him and to believe that she deserved to be treated in a respectful way, according to how she viewed respect.

We told Marie that if she wanted to heal the trust issues in her life, her first assignment was to get clear on how she wanted her relationship with Jim to be and how she wanted to be treated. Then, share with him without blame, judgment, or accusations, what was real for her. We asked her to "trust" in her belief that she deserved to be treated in a respectful way by her partner

and to begin “speaking up” for herself in a very different way than she had in the past.

One of the important skills that Marie had to learn was to feel her feelings and acknowledge them as being “okay” when they came up. When she was able to do this, her feelings would serve as her internal guide for how she wanted to be in her relationship with Jim. As a result, she had more confidence and started to trust herself more.

The importance of getting in touch with what you are feeling...

We realize that the reason you are probably reading this material is so that you can learn to trust the people in your life or you and your partner can learn to rebuild trust that’s been broken. The only way we know to start to trust yourself and your partner is to learn to listen to and observe what’s going on within you and to use your feelings as signs that there is something to pay attention to within yourself.

Just as Marie experienced, if you bury, try to pretend mistrusting feelings or any feelings aren’t there, they just come back up as anger, rage or some other emotion or action that gets in the way of connecting with other people.

One way we use to get in touch with our feelings is to slow our breathing down using belly breaths, and practice the [“Power of Presence”](#) exercise.

We explain both of these techniques in the Appendix of this book. We suggest that you use this exercise whenever emotions come up that are intense for you. If you do, you may begin to feel a sense of calm, clarity about your situation and a sense of possibilities for your life that you may not have felt before.

Here’s one man’s description of how he is getting in touch with his feelings and how the “Power of Presence” exercise is helping him to heal jealousy in his life:

“When jealous feelings come up, I feel this feeling in the pit of my stomach. It feels uneasy. I feel insecure and afraid. I’m not sure why this is happening. It’s a false feeling and I need to be able to deal with it. The breathing exercises have helped dramatically to release some of the tension I have been experiencing during these periods. The Presence exercise has changed it for me whether I’m alone or with my wife. I still have those false feelings but I’m on the right track.

The first step is recognition of where you are and that’s what the breathing allows you to do. Then you can shift it. The idea is to understand that you’re there, then take action to change the physical characteristics of what’s going on. By doing the physical changes, you actually release the stress that’s going on inside you.”

Here’s another woman’s description of the process she is going through to get in touch with her feelings and heal the trust issues in her life:

“Sometimes, it’s moment by moment and sometimes it’s a roller coaster ride with a steady climb but there are peaks and valleys. I can now allow myself to feel sad or whatever and then clarity comes. I get confused or hurt or upset and then I get clarity out of it. When I go into that cycle now, it doesn’t upset me as much because I know that clarity will come out of that confusion.

There’s a process I learned that’s really helpful to me. I call it an “Ah Ha” moment.

Here’s what happens--I’m getting upset. I’m confused but I know that something’s going to come out of this unpleasant, difficult situation. The next thing I do is to sit with whatever is bothering me and I can’t let it go. I have to figure out what it is, either by journaling, or meditating. A lot of times I just have to write. I have to make sure that I’m honest and authentic. I can’t play games. This is just what works for me. I have to write down exactly what comes up for me.”

When women and men begin to trust themselves and to work with their emotions, like the two people in our examples, they project 'I am competent to be in this world and in this body. I am competent to just be.' Everything else goes on from there—being able to trust other people, being able to be open to new possibilities, whether it's in a new relationship, job, or career. It comes from being able to trust yourself—being able to make good decisions to have what you want in your life and to open to allow people in instead of pushing them away.

How to change your internal self-talk to help you create more trust and better relationships

As humans, we talk to ourselves all day long and what we say to ourselves largely determines the success we have and the quality of life that we experience. If a videotape recorded all that we say to ourselves and the "movies" we run in our heads, what we would see and hear may not be what we are wanting to consciously create in our lives.

You are the director of your life and your relationships and if something like trust isn't working, we are suggesting that you change the script and start creating a different "movie" for your life.

According to Shad Helmstetter, author of the book Choices, up to 77% of what you tell yourself may be working against you. We are often unaware that we are making unconscious choices with this negative self-talk that sabotages and defeats us.

We'll explain what we mean. Every now and then we have "ear worms" that simply drive us crazy. These aren't actual worms but are songs that get in our heads and we can't seem to think of anything else. For whatever reason, these are usually songs that we don't like in the first place but just seem to "stick" in our brains, playing over and over.

To remove these "ear worms," we play a cd that we love and the "ear worm" disappears.

That's what it's like when we constantly run negative, disempowering movies and self-talk about our relationships and our lives.

We need to become aware of what we are saying to ourselves and start making new choices if we want positive results and to begin fostering trust in our lives.

For example...

Instead of running a movie and perpetuating self-talk like "I'll never have a trusting relationship" and constantly see yourself in unhappy relationships (past or future), we suggest you change the self-talk to something like..."I'm open to new possibilities in my relationships and my relationships are getting better." Your positive "movie" could be seeing yourself happy and trusting the person you are with.

It might sound like a big leap for you to begin running this type of positive movie in your head but we suggest that you start with something that is just a little more positive than what you've been thinking.

The trick is to not simply repeat these positive phrases a few times a day but rather to run the "movie" that you want and can believe many times during the day.

For example...

If you are in an unhappy relationship and you tell yourself that you have a fabulous, close, connected relationship, your brain will simply tell you that you're crazy. But if you run the movie of something you can believe that is a little better such as--"I'm finding some ways to enjoy myself in my life and I really liked the way my husband (wife) helped me yesterday," your brain just may accept that idea.

See how much better that feels than dwelling on what he or she did wrong?

As you learn to run positive "movies" in your head, be sure to add tastes, feelings, sounds and anything else that will make it seem real to you. Allow

yourself to appreciate what's good in your life rather than dwelling on what's not working.

Susie used this technique when we were at a seminar in Texas. We had been up early and late to bed for several days in a row and the little voice in her head told her that she would be very tired the next day and not alert.

When she realized that she had been running the self-defeating movie in her head of being tired the next day, she immediately changed it to seeing herself as energetic and excited the next morning. Guess what? She did feel energetic the next day.

Before you discard this idea as positive-thinking mumbo jumbo that will never work in your life, we urge you to give it a try. If you do, you may be surprised at the positive changes that can happen in your life.

A word of caution...

If you are being physically, emotionally or sexually abused in any way, we suggest that you find a way to get help from a counselor or an organization for victims of domestic violence in your community. No amount of positive "self talk" and positive mental movies will change this situation unless both of you get help. If you are being abused, you will have to learn how to create more positive "self talk" but in the meantime, you will first need to take care of your physical safety and well-being.

How the stories we tell ourselves can create mistrust

Everyone loves a good story. When it comes to our relationships, sometimes the "stories" we tell ourselves about situations with other people in our lives aren't very healthy and lead us to mistrust them, even when their intentions are pure.

These "stories" that we tell ourselves usually come from our past.

If you're having trust issues, we suggest examining your own thoughts, feelings and issues from the past that have yet to be healed first before looking outward to blame someone else.

We'll give you an example of how not healing an old wound can cause trust issues to come between you and another person and show you the benefits if you do.

In the beginning of our relationship, Otto started writing about marketing ideas. Because Susie is a much better editor than he is, he would ask for her help. Each time she would give some suggestions for improving his writing, he would become very defensive and it would take some time for him to get past the feeling of being criticized unfairly and trust that she was just trying to help.

He found that he viewed the criticism of his work as an "attack" because of past experiences with other people in his life instead of understanding that Susie was just trying to make the project better. In those moments, he didn't trust that Susie was "on his side."

While he "understood" mentally that she was trying to make his book better, there were emotions that he hadn't been able to acknowledge that wouldn't allow him to "trust" her and this process.

Even though we have felt like we were soul mates from the beginning of our relationship, like most couples, there are challenges that have come up between us, many left over from past relationships. This was one of them.

Some people believe that when you enter into new relationships, you are starting fresh and you leave all of that baggage from previous relationships behind you. You always hope that's the case, but the truth is, you don't always heal everything from past relationships when you move on.

We believe that in a new relationship, or even an old one, there's always another opportunity to heal those parts of ourselves that end up causing us problems.

A few months after the first marketing book was published, we got a chance to do it differently. Otto was once again writing another marketing book and Susie was the editor.

But this time, we noticed a difference in Otto's reaction to Susie's editing suggestions.

When she made her suggestions, he still had an initial reaction, but this time he didn't take the criticism personally. He trusted her and felt that Susie just wanted to help him to make the book better.

What had changed?

Otto was willing to feel his emotions in the moment and then direct his attention to honoring Susie's gifts and talents instead of becoming defensive because he didn't have those skills. He was willing to change his habitual behavior and come from a place of love and not fear by inviting Susie and her talents into being part of the project. He was willing to say to himself, "What can I learn from this person and how can what this person has to share help me become better?"

Was this easy for him? Not on your life but he was willing in this relationship to open his heart, to perceive her as his friend and to build strength and connection instead of mistrust and distance.

He had created a "story" in his mind that Susie was criticizing him for his "poor" writing skills like he perceived other people had done in the past. What was really at the bottom of his "story" was that Otto was critical of himself about his writing skills. Until he could get past this "story" he had created and change his thoughts, he continued to mistrust anyone's motivations in situations like that one.

This is a beautiful example of how Otto was able to take another step in letting go of the past and deepening trust in our relationship and in himself.

We believe that the foundation of any relationship is emotional safety and trust. This means that physical safety is a given and you feel emotionally safe enough to be who you really are and be able to express yourself freely. We also believe that it is impossible to build trust when you erect walls between you and the other person. A way that you build walls is to react from old patterns of thinking and being without getting in touch with what you are feeling.

In his book, Awaken the Giant Within, Tony Robbins said, "It's not the events of our lives that shape us, but our beliefs as to what those events mean."

It's the meaning you attach to something that determines how you react and how you feel about it.

Susie really tries not to spin "stories" in her head about how other people react to her but recently she caught herself doing just that.

She has been friends with a woman in our community for many years.

Susie started noticing that this woman was abrupt on the phone with her when she called her at her workplace on business. When Susie gave a speech at a local woman's group and this woman was in the audience, Susie noticed that this woman seemed distracted and not really paying much attention.

Well, you guessed it...Susie began making up "stories" in her head that she had done something to cause this woman to be "cold" and distant with her and wondered what she had done to cause this woman to dislike her.

Luckily, this didn't go on very long because the two of them ran into one another at the YMCA and it was very evident that the woman's stress and apparent distance had nothing to do with Susie and had everything to do with her job. She even told Susie how much she had enjoyed the speech she gave to the women's group.

What a glorious learning experience and reminder this was for Susie to trust in herself!

Had Susie chosen to distance herself from her friend because she was being snubbed and didn't know what was wrong, she would have lost out on a long-time friendship and would have carried unresolved hurt and anger perhaps for a very long time.

What "stories" do you tell yourself about what's going on in your relationships with your friends, family, co-workers or partner that cause you to mistrust them?

Are they "stories" that will bring you closer together and build trust or move you further apart?

When we tell ourselves unhealthy stories that aren't based in reality, it only keeps us stuck in the past or has us spending time projecting into the future about something that may or may not happen.

To create conscious, connected trusting relationships, we suggest that you choose to look at what's actually happening in the present moment.

If you don't know what's really going on with someone else—ask in a way that does not make the other person defensive.

Have the courage to take the time to find out what's going on with the person. It's the only way you'll know.

One very important way to begin trusting yourself more is to stop habitual responses that have tended to damage or ruin your relationships. In other words, take a moment to feel what you are feeling, interrupt the pattern or what we call the "Relationship Dance" of "When you do this or this happens, I say or do that..." Ask yourself, "Is this true?" This interruption allows you to have a different response to a possibly familiar situation.

When you take this moment to breathe or whatever helps you to interrupt your unhealthy “stories” and negative self-talk and bring yourself into the present moment, you will begin to make the changes in your relationships that you want and bring more love into your life. This also helps you to see things are they really are and helps to build your confidence and self-esteem.

As you will read in the next chapter, it is possible to learn how to interrupt your destructive patterns and to create trust in yourself and in your relationships.

Chapter 2

April's Story about Healing the Past while Building trust in herself and in a New Relationship...

By Susie & Otto Collins

April, like a lot of people, has had her share of issues in the area of trust, not only with men that she's been in relationships with but also with herself.

When it comes to relationships, she has wondered "Will I ever have the type of relationship that I want?" many times in the past few years. While some of her friends seem to have "given up" on relationships and have become bitter, she hasn't.

She's now in the beginning of a new relationship with a man and both of them have made the conscious decision to do it differently this time.

We decided to interview April for this book because in many ways, her past is typical of many people who have trust issues that we encounter in our coaching practice and those who buy our books.

If you really listen to April's story, there is a lot to be learned about healing the past, taking responsibility and learning to trust again. She's a great example of someone who has been in many painful relationships and yet has a desire to keep learning, growing and opening up to new possibilities for her life.

Here's her story...

April has been married and divorced twice, in and out of several relationships in the last few years and has considered herself a "failure" at committed relationships.

For the past six weeks, she has been getting to know Ethan. They are becoming close friends and exploring the possibility of being in a committed relationship. They are in the same social groups and they are just beginning to “come out” as a couple. When asked what they mean to each other, they tell people, “The relationship is what it is.” Both of them are a little fearful of “failing” at yet another relationship but are agreeing to do this one differently. They have agreed to be honest and straightforward with each other, not hold anything back and to be themselves.

They both have done a lot of inner work on healing their past relationships and painful experiences in their lives and seem to be ready to let go and move on to a more positive experience.

When we asked April to describe herself in previous relationships with men, here’s what she said...

“I had no voice. I was not in touch at all with what I wanted. I was going through life because someone else told me how to do it. I lived by other people’s rules and what they wanted me to do, how they wanted me to feel, always alert to potential problems so I could spearhead them and manipulate things in a way that would go the way I wanted them to go.

I was controlling, not open, and very shut down. I couldn’t share a thing with anyone. Even though I was in a relationship with a husband who was gay, we never talked about it even through the divorce. I was totally shut down. I cried a lot.

I describe it as being sucked down into a deep hole. It wasn’t like I wanted to kill myself but I didn’t want to live. I wanted to move through life and get it over with. I was just being sucked down and I didn’t see any way out of it. I was willing to go through life and then when it was over, it would be a relief. That’s how I felt.”

April talked about her fears that are coming up in this new relationship with Ethan and how she realized that these fears are about a past relationship and not trusting herself:

“I woke up this morning and I was crying. I asked myself—‘Okay, what’s going on here? I’m happy in this new relationship so why should I be crying?’ What was going on with me was about the past and fears about being in a relationship. I’m aware of it now that when that I get scared, it’s what has gone on in the past that I haven’t healed.

When I went deeper with what I was feeling, what was going on with me was feeling very connected to Ethan and also being afraid. Fears about Larry (an old boyfriend who had lived with her) were coming up again. I was reminded of all the fear and distrust I had with him when my family was around. I’d have to prepare myself when my family was coming for a visit. I’d have to be actively working to make it all run smoothly and I would ask myself ‘How can I fix it? How can I make them like him?’ I had to be on guard all the time because the energy wouldn’t be right if I didn’t. My thoughts were—‘My family wouldn’t like him and no one would get along if I wasn’t there to manage it all.’

This morning I was crying about this distrust of Larry, distrust of myself and the fear that I have to do something to make it all okay. But I realized that these feelings of fear are not about Ethan and about what is going on now.”

When we asked her to describe how she didn’t trust herself in that moment when she went back in her mind to her past relationship, here’s what she said:

“In that moment, I felt like I didn’t want to be with Larry. I said to myself ‘I’m in this relationship. He lives here. I’m not comfortable. I don’t want to be with him. I’m having doubts about it and I can’t let anyone know. I have to continue with it. I have to make it work for everyone. This is where I need to be.’

But what I realized was that I wasn't going with my feelings. I wasn't trusting that my feelings were valid and I wasn't allowing myself to sit and feel and acknowledge what I was feeling. I couldn't do that. I was always worried about what other people thought I should be feeling.

When I finally learned how to listen to my feelings and to take them seriously, I shifted to trusting myself.

In this relationship with Ethan, I don't feel like I have to control anything. I trust myself to just be and I don't try to make something happen. It's trusting me to just be and not work at it."

We asked her to talk about trust in her life and here's what she said:

"I don't have trust issues that people won't pay me back if I lend them something. That isn't an issue with me. But I haven't trusted myself to honor the choices I've made and to make the right choices. I haven't trusted myself to speak what I'm feeling because I'm just too afraid of judgment, afraid I wouldn't please. I didn't even know what I wanted when I was growing up.

The other shift I've made with trust—this came up with Ethan also—is that I have trusted that people will leave me. I have trusted people to do what I know them to do and in my life, that's to leave me. That feeling comes up with people I feel really connected to.

This feeling that I trust that people I'm connected to will leave came up the other night in my new relationship with Ethan. I was feeling that Ethan was going to leave me when he was connecting with Sally, his good friend. I felt myself pulling away and I thought 'I need to let them do their thing because he's going to leave me anyway. He's not going to stick around with me. It's not going to last.'

That's where I was in that moment but I snapped back. I said to myself, 'These feelings I'm having are not about him. They are about past relationships.' So I reached up and touched his hand that was on my shoulder. I had to make a connection with him. I had to choose to go to that connection again and tell myself that this is not what's happening now."

When we asked her to further explain how she was able to shift her thinking, here's what she said:

"First of all, I felt myself in that moment going into old patterns of manipulation. I told myself—'He's sitting with Sally. He's connecting with her. What do I need to do to make him care for me more?' In that moment, I trusted that he wanted to be with her and not me. This is how I used to do relationships. Manipulation. I would say to myself, 'What do I need to do to make him acceptable to my family or make him want to be with me?' Instantaneously, when I said that to myself in that situation with Ethan, I snapped myself back. I remembered that what happened in my old relationships is not what I am experiencing with him right now. I am genuine with him and am able to speak authentically with him.

When I started to retreat and think about how I could get him to like me better than Sally, I made the choice that this is not where I want to go and not what I want to do. When I reached up and touched his hand, I knew he was there for me. I knew that this relationship wasn't the same as past relationships. I shifted and I was able to get out of those old feelings. I had to physically touch him to make this shift.

That's the first time I've ever done that. Then the other thing I've always done is that I've trusted that men will like me more if I am with them sexually. I was always becoming more sexual quicker than I emotionally wanted to be because I thought my partners would like me more.

Ethan and I have decided that that's not what we want. We're very happy just being connected and being together. That's not even something we're going into right now. This is a whole different kind of relationship for me.

When we asked her to tell us a little more about her relationship with Ethan, here's what she told us:

"We have built such a connection with each other. I look forward to sharing with him what I went through this morning instead of what I need to do to change it or fix it. We have such a connection in this way that it doesn't matter. I'm so much better staying in the moment with him that it doesn't matter where we're going in this relationship. We just are. That's how I feel.

I don't think I've ever felt that either. I'm always planning where I'll be with a partner 6 months down the road. I think it's good to have an idea of where you're going with your relationship. I don't mean that intention isn't important in a relationship but I'm able to stay in the moment with him. And that's a choice I'm making. Something shifted within me to do that because I don't want to do things the way I've done them in the past because it hasn't gotten me what I've wanted. I know that if you always do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got. I just want something different."

What she was telling us was that the key for her "doing this relationship differently" is to identify that this is something that she did in the past with someone else and to bring herself out of that by reminding herself that this is not the past but is this present moment.

She went deeper with her explanation...

"Looking back on my last relationship (with Peter) now, I realize that I was beginning to be able to recognize what I was doing when I began manipulating to get love, as had been my pattern. When I kept emailing him and he kept backing away, I was grabbing at something that wasn't there. In my mind, I thought that if I do this, he'll like me. I felt like that's the only way I could be in a relationship. I had to do something to make him like me. I had to give to get. It was in that relationship that I felt that shift. I told myself that this is not working for me. Even when I was being honest with him, my underlying payoff was 'Oh, he will like me more now because

I'm being honest with him' but I just couldn't make it work. At the end of that relationship, I did realize what I had been doing.

I know that a lot of my behaviors, if I go deeper, are about a payoff for me. When I ask myself 'What's really behind what I'm doing?' the payoff seems to be—'They'll like me more' or 'I'll get someone to do what I want them to do.' It's all about control. And I think being right now where I am with Ethan, I've really had to let go and know that I don't need to control. It feels much freer. I don't have to work as hard. I'm not really attached to what may happen in this relationship."

When we said to her, "So you're in this new relationship and it sounds like you're simultaneously building trust as well as healing things from your past," here's how she replied...

"I had set up the pattern that I have to do something to get love. Fortunately, every relationship I've been in has allowed me to go deeper and heal a little more. I don't believe I would be able to connect with Ethan today if I hadn't gone through all that stuff in the past.

I know that all these people are players in my spiritual journey. Several partners taught me about anger. Finally I stopped manifesting angry partners when I learned to look at my own anger and to stand up and not be afraid of my partner's anger.

When I'm doing centering or being quiet, I can see the progression of where I was to where I am now. I truly trust that this relationship with Ethan is going to be different. And I feel that because of all the experiences I've had, that I can just be who I am in this relationship. When stuff comes up, it comes up and I'm not shutting down."

When we asked what advice she would give to people who are starting a new relationship or have left a relationship that didn't work out, here's what she said...

“When things come up, take a look at what’s underneath them. Ask yourself, ‘Is it really about what’s going on right now?’ That takes a lot of work to sit with things and process, reflect and go deep inside and being willing to communicate about it. It means staying in the moment and trusting in divine order for my life. Letting go of the past is a difficult term for me to use because I just go deeper in understanding and I don’t know if I really let go. To me that’s like wishing it away. I think I just understand it better and peel off the layers of my pain.”

We think that’s great advice for anyone trying to heal trust issues in their life. After many relationships, April is beginning to trust herself and trust that she can be who she truly is in relationships.

We invite you to learn from April’s story and begin the process of learning to trust in your life.

Chapter 3

Building trust in a new relationship

By Susie and Otto Collins

In the last chapter, April told us how she was learning to trust in herself and her belief that she could “do it differently” in a new relationship this time.

Before the two of us met, we each had been in long-term marriages that ended in divorce. Like April, we too were determined to heal the past and move forward toward creating the type of relationships that we wanted. Independently, as we were recovering from those past relationships, we realized how we wanted our next relationships to be.

When we came together, it was like the proverbial “soul mate” experience. Like so many others, we felt like we had “come home” when we were with each other and that feeling has been there ever since.

Did we need to build trust between us even though we discovered we were soul mates? In some ways “no,” but in many ways “yes.”

In this chapter, we’d like to tell you a few of the ways that we have built trust in our relationship. Whether you are in a new relationship and want to “do it differently” or you’re in a long-term relationship and want to make it closer, more alive and more connected, we think these ideas will help you create the trust that you want between the two of you.

1. It’s never too soon to make agreements

In this book, there are several excellent chapters about how to create agreements. In our opinion, it’s never too soon to begin putting them into practice and asking “How do we want this relationship to be right now?” and possibly in the future.

We think it is important to have a discussion and make an agreement about monogamy as soon as the relationship becomes sexual. “Are we committed to being monogamous or not?” If you choose monogamy, we suggest that you agree to make that monogamy truly exciting and fulfilling.

An agreement that we have made with each other that has certainly helped us to be more trusting is that if there is a time that either one of us is sexually attracted to someone else and is thinking of having a sexual relationship with that person that we will talk with each other beforehand.

If both people honor this agreement, it removes the possibility that your partner is sneaking around and betraying you. It allows both of you to stand in integrity with yourself and with your partner. Knowing that the other person will come to you before they act is a powerful way to build trust.

Along these same lines, make an agreement that you both can talk about your sexual feelings with each other, freely and openly, knowing that the other will listen and not judge.

Another way to build trust with agreements in the beginning of a committed relationship is to agree that the relationship can end if you both have given it your “all” in creating it together and if it’s still not growing. This agreement gives the relationship integrity and honesty with the idea that we are together not just because we have a history together or we have made a promise in front of a church full of people. We’re together because we want to be together and choose to be together in every moment.

There is vitality in relationships with that type of agreement. Couples who don’t have that agreement run the risk of becoming dead inside because they may feel trapped for one reason or the other.

Approach your relationship with the idea that you can renew it all of the time. In each moment you can begin anew.

2. Separate what happened in the past from what’s happening in this relationship right now

When you're beginning a new relationship, since both of you are usually on your "best behavior" and you're filled with the excitement and rush of a new love, everything can seem to be beautiful and perfect between the two of you. But sooner or later, when the proverbial "honeymoon" period wears off, there will be things that come up that bother each of you about the other.

Chances are that some of this "stuff" that comes up between the two of you is old "stuff" from previous relationships that you haven't healed yet. It's inevitable that you will carry old ways of thinking and acting that were part of previous relationships into the relationship you are trying to begin.

The trick that we've found useful is for each person to become aware of his/her own baggage that is being carried from previous relationships into this new one. Adopt a commitment to learn from the past and not get defensive when you find yourself in one of those old patterns.

Sometimes we recognize that a pattern is coming from past relationships but sometimes we don't recognize it in the moment. So we have an agreement to help each other see what we aren't able to see at the time.

What has been helpful for us is to honestly tell the other person--in a non-judgmental way—"I recognize that there may be a problem between the two of us but I'm also wondering if the issue may be about another relationship and not so much about this one?" This only works if both of you have agreed beforehand how to handle conflict between the two of you. When we do this, we know that we have only the best intentions for the other person. We have done this from the start of our relationship and continue to do so.

In any case, find a way to communicate with each other about your old, destructive patterns that you both can agree on. Decide to listen without becoming defensive and be willing to heal those parts of yourself that are keeping you from having the relationship that you want. Separate out what is really happening now in this relationship and what you have carried from other relationships into this one.

No matter what has happened up until now, your past does not equal your future. You can create what you want now and you can heal the past.

3. Appreciate differences

When we are attracted to another person, we are usually so caught up in our similarities that we are temporarily blinded by the fact that we are two people with unique experiences, likes, and dislikes. When this honeymoon phase wears off, we begin questioning sometimes whether we should even be together as each of us begins to show who we really are. As the differences begin appearing, what happens after that is usually a tug of war of trying to change the other person to what we think is the right way of thinking, acting, and living our lives.

What we've observed is that opposites really do attract each other, even though we might not recognize it in the beginning of the relationship. Those traits that were once so endearing turn into the ones that tend to drive us crazy. What we have to do is not just accept these differences but honor and appreciate them if we hope to have a great relationship with this person.

When major differences are present, the challenge is to grow and to become better because of those differences instead of allowing them to become divisive and destructive to the relationship.

One of the reasons that we believe we all come together in relationship is to learn, expand, and grow from the differences that are inevitable between us.

What we mean by that is that when you recognize and embrace different or unique qualities of another person that you may not have, you become a better person because of it.

In our relationship, the two of us are very much alike in many ways and have similar beliefs, interests and desires. Even though we are very compatible, there are big differences that present challenges in our life together.

One of those differences is the way we have dealt with painful issues that we need to process, whether those issues are ones between us or not.

There are times when Otto needs some time and space to get to the bottom of some anxiety or upset within him. When we first got together, it was difficult for Susie to understand his process for working through things.

As Susie began to understand, honor and appreciate Otto's process, Susie really "got" that there were times in her own life when she needed to dig a little deeper within herself. She discovered that taking some time and space to sort out her feelings that she hadn't realized were there was actually very helpful.

So instead of being judgmental that he was different from her in the way he processes things internally, she began to embrace and practice the same type of process which leads to a deeper understanding of herself and what she wants in her life.

Because this is Otto's process, this does not mean that all men take a lot of time and need a lot of space to process what's going on inside them.

These kinds of differences can exist between people of either gender in friendships, intimate, business, or family relationships.

It's all about shifting your perception about those differences that either makes the relationship great or tears it down.

The point is that if we agree to learn from each other, the differences can serve as a catalyst for creating better relationships and lives.

Our commitment to each other is to learn from those differences and by doing that we have built trust between us from the very beginning of our relationship.

Here are a few ways that we have found helpful to look at differences:

1. Recognize that the differences do exist and don't dance around them. Agree to talk about them and the feelings that come up when they happen.
2. Make it "okay" to have differences in your relationship. Don't assign blame because one person wants to do something a certain way and you just don't see it that way. The exception to this idea is that you never make harmful speech or violence okay in the relationship. Just because you're making differences okay, it doesn't imply superiority.
3. Create a conscious strategy about how you are going to deal with those differences before they come up. If one person wants to "go to the cave," decide ahead of time that when that happens, the two of you will come back together after an agreed upon period of time and reconnect. Then stick to your agreements.
4. Ask "What can I learn from the way you are being or the way you are doing something?" Be open to doing things differently. After several years of struggle, we are learning how to appreciate each other's skills, asking that question rather than trying to change "you" to be more like "me."

Of course we revert to old habits every now and then. When we do, we recommit to our agreements to regain our connection. We've discovered that when we embrace and honor our differences instead of tugging against them, we communicate better and strengthen our connection and our love.

We've found that just because two people are different, it doesn't have to be a bad thing or indicate incompatibility. If both people are committed to creating a great relationship, the differences between them can actually serve to make them and the relationship stronger and better.

We suggest practicing changing your viewpoint about your partner's differences. Remember, you do not have to adopt anything that doesn't resonate with you or allow someone to be harmful to you with their actions. But stand back and allow others to have their own experiences, as you have yours. When you start to judge another person, stop and remember that this

situation is a gift to you, a chance to broaden yourself. Open your heart and allow the differences to bring you together instead of tearing you apart.

4. Kill monsters while they're little

You may be wondering what monsters have to do with building trust in new relationships and we say, a lot! Killing the monsters while they're little means when issues or "monsters" come up, if you wait until those get to be more than you can deal with, they turn into challenges that seem insurmountable.

What do we do when these "monsters" show up? We acknowledge that something has come up that we need to look at and not sweep it under the carpet. We have agreed that we will take personal responsibility for the feelings that we have. We share them with each other and we agree to listen without getting defensive or judgmental.

Now, this is a whole lot easier to handle when it's early and the issues are small but difficult to handle when issues become large and complex. Have you ever tried separating the roots of an old plant that's nothing but an entangled, huge ball that's impossible to sort out? That's the way it is when there's an issue to tackle in your relationship. When it's little, it's much easier to sort out.

Agreeing to kill monsters while they're little builds trust because you know that nothing is simmering or twisted underneath in the other person's mind. You know that whatever is going on will be brought up when it's small instead of being hidden and brought up 6 months later when it's a much bigger issue.

5. Show constant appreciation, keep a sense of humor and a light heart

Look in your partner's eyes everyday and appreciate them verbally. Take time to talk and listen to each other. When you think of your partner, don't dwell on "faults" but focus on what you appreciate and like in the other. If you focus on appreciating what you love about your partner, that's what you'll get more of. Trust us on this one!

Here are some pointers for expressing more gratitude, kindness and love with your partner:

- Think more about the words you use, especially when you are tired, irritated, need sleep, or stressed out
- See how gossip hurts people, including yourself and your partner, and work to eliminate it from your life
- Try to replace words that hurt with words that encourage, uplift and give praise
- In your thoughts, dwell on what your partner is doing right instead of what he/she is doing wrong

Choose to build each other up instead of tearing each other down. Choose to love each other with thoughts, actions, and words and you will see how trust grows between the two of you.

Chapter 4

Building Trust with Clear, Honest Communication

By Susie & Otto Collins

Recently, a man called to schedule a relationship coaching session with us. He was in a long-distance relationship with a woman from Great Britain (he lived in the United States) and there didn't seem to be much trust between the two of them. He hadn't been able to contact her for several days because she didn't return his phone calls. He assumed that she was being "unfaithful" and he wrote her an accusatory letter.

In his letter, he made accusations that he later regretted and now he wanted to know how to handle the situation and what to say to her. Several times during our session, he would ask, "Should I say this or should I say that?" and we would always ask him to go to what he was feeling and what was real for him.

Like so many people, this man didn't know how to access what he was feeling and then translate those feelings into words so another person could hear them. Although he knew that clear, honest communication was a good thing, he didn't know how to go about doing it.

It's often risky to look inside yourself to find out what you are feeling and then to speak authentically about it. There is a fear that saying something that is very personal might scare, upset your partner or that you will look foolish.

The truth is if you don't take intelligent risks to be authentic and if you don't say what's important to you, mistrust and resentments build and false assumptions are created. If you don't take the risk of being who you are and letting the other person know who you are, it can be very detrimental to a relationship.

Trust is built in every moment of every day. Nothing ever stays the same, including trust in a relationship. It's in each individual moment that a relationship is either strengthened or weakened.

In every moment, you have the opportunity and the choice to stop and face a situation and be authentic or deny it, ignore it and let resentments, fear or mistrust take the place of facing a challenge in the relationship.

In every moment, you have the choice of taking a moment to realize what you are feeling, telling the other person in a way they can hear it and also listening without getting defensive or reacting defensively from past patterns.

Saying the difficult things...

So, once you know what you are feeling, how do you translate those feelings in such a way that the other person can hear them?

1. Begin with an attitude of curiosity instead of blame and you will see your relationships deepen and grow. Have it as your intention that this other person is your friend and you are approaching this conversation in the spirit of love and not "gotch ya." Approaching conversations to make the other person realize that you are right and he or she is wrong just creates more separation between the two of you. When you approach this discussion with a sense of wonder and with an attitude of "What can I learn from this?" you are opening to the possibility of healing your relationship.
2. Create an environment for open communication. We've found that sitting close, holding hands and making eye contact helps to keep our connection, especially when we have something difficult to say to each other. Be sure to turn off the television and park the kids in another room so that the two of you can be present with one another without distractions.
3. If communication is a problem between the two of you, it might be a good idea to agree for each of you to have a set amount of uninterrupted time to

speaking while the other listens. For example, one person may speak for 5 minutes without being interrupted and then it's the other's turn to speak for 5 minutes. If you try this, it just might change your relationship forever!

4. Say difficult things in ways that the other person can hear them. If you or the other person reacts to certain words that are used, take the time to listen and find out why those words trigger negative reactions. Talk about alternative words or phrases that you might use.

For example, one of our workshop attendees said that she would always get upset and shut down when her husband said that she had been "short" with him. When we asked her why this word triggered her so much, she discovered that she had always been sensitive to the fact that she was physically a short woman and the word "short" (no matter what the meaning) was offensive to her. They both searched for a word he could use to convey his meaning and they came up with "snippy." What might be even better is for him to tell her how her actions are making him feel but we felt like it was a good start for better communication between them.

The point is that if you see obvious signs that certain words are triggering your partner, don't keep using those words without finding out what their meanings are to that person.

The very act of speaking and listening to heart-felt explanations about words that trigger strong emotions can be a way to build trust in itself.

5. Use Communication "Openers"

Do you need "openers" to get someone to listen and communicate with you? Here are a few phrases that we have found helpful that open the door for communication and invite another person to listen to what you are feeling—

"Our relationship is very important to me and I want to do what I can do to clear up our misunderstanding and distance between us."

“I want us to be able to resolve this issue between us so we can both learn from it and have a close, connected, passionate relationship.”

“I’d like to say these things to you and I am asking you to just listen to me and then I will give you a chance to tell me what’s going on with you.”

By using any of these phrases, you are asking honestly for what you want. You are also building trust that you will each be heard in a kind and loving way. What a gift to learn to give to each other!

6. Be ready to make heart-felt requests about what you would like to have happen in your relationship without blaming the other person. These requests can be specific ways that the other person can help you to feel more secure in your relationship. Make sure you also say what you are going to do for yourself to feel more secure. These requests can also be specific ways that the two of you can rebuild love and trust in your relationship—such as planning a “date night” once a month for the two of you to truly be together.

8. Make sure that you do not interrupt, judge or do anything to shut off the flow of communication between the two of you. Allow each of you the chance to express what you are feeling. Even if your partner isn’t quite on the “same page” as you are with this learning, you will be able to move toward healing the trust issues between you if you communicate what is real for you.

Listen to how one person learned to communicate in her relationship after trust had been broken...

“We have much more intimacy and trust than before all this happened. It was a painful lesson for both of us. Honest and open communication was key. He had to let me vent and I had to not persecute him constantly. I told him there was no way around the pain and betrayal—except through it. Trust is a fragile thing and it cannot be restored overnight. We both struggled with the trust issue. I gradually relaxed and learned to trust him—

but it took time. And, he did a pretty good job of accepting responsibility for his part and understanding my emotional outbursts without getting defensive. Most of all, we communicate our feelings now. When I'm upset, I tell him and why and he agrees not to judge me and take it personally and vice-versa. Honesty wins after all."

Do you hear how they are agreeing to speak honestly to each other and to listen without judging each other?

That's an important key to learning to build trust in a relationship.

Communicate before your relationship reaches "the point of no return"

Have you ever left a job and have had to do an "exit interview" before leaving?

Many companies and corporations do these "exit interviews" and it's been our experience that a similar phenomenon happens in personal and intimate relationships that are breaking up as well.

We'll explain what we mean...

In these "exit interviews," an employee is usually asked what, if anything, the company could have done to make their job and employment a more satisfying experience. What usually ends up happening is the employee tells the truth about why he or she is leaving and shares things that have previously been unsaid (especially to management) because now there's nothing to lose by being truthful.

It's been our experience that the same thing happens in some personal and intimate relationships that are breaking up.

Like most people, both of us have experienced the break up of long-term relationships. As we look back on how these relationships ended in our lives, it was only after we had decided to "call it quits" that we were willing

to honestly share our thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears and dreams with that other person without censoring them.

It was only after it looked like there was nothing to lose that we opened up to our partners and said what had been true for us in those previous relationships.

To us, the similarities between the "exit interview" and what happens at the end of many relationships are striking.

So if you're wondering why we're bringing this up, here it is...

If you want to build trust in your relationship, one of the keys is to be willing to speak your truth, straight from your heart as soon as you know it and in a way that someone else can hear it.

The idea is to share what's really on your mind and in your heart before your relationship gets to the "point of no return" and it ends.

The time to build trust in a relationship is as problems and challenges arise and not to allow them to simmer and fester into resentments that can build and finally destroy it.

Think of your car... If you hear an unusual sound or feel something out of the ordinary while you are driving, you will take it to a service department to get it looked at.

If you let the problems with the car continue and procrastinate getting it serviced, you may be in for costly repairs and run the risk of being stranded on the side of the road if your car stalls.

So it is with your relationships. You are either moving closer together and building trust or moving further apart, tearing it down.

Create a "Miracle Moment" by Speaking your Truth

Recently we went to a 3-day conference in Orlando, Florida. Halfway through the weekend, we had the choice of either creating a "miracle moment" or creating mistrust, disconnection and distance in our relationship.

Here's what happened...

As the two of us were walking out the door of the seminar for an hour and a half lunch break, two women in the group joined us and asked us to go to lunch with them.

As we walked with them, Susie looked at Otto and told him that while she would like to go to lunch with them, she would really like to take advantage of the beautiful sunny 80 degree day and take a swim during their 90 minute break. Otto told Susie that he would like to have a hot lunch and do some networking.

What happened in that brief discussion between the two of us can be called a "miracle moment."

The chance for a "miracle moment" in a relationship is when you either hide your truth and who you are or you are authentic and allow your partner to be authentic.

We took a "moment" to go within ourselves to find out what we each wanted to do with the 90 minute lunch break. And then after being clear within ourselves, we shared what was important to us and listened to each other in a non-judgmental way.

Even though we would have liked to have spent that time together, we were each able to do what we were really called to do without a lot of drama or feeling guilty about our choices.

Even when it's something as trivial as how to spend a 90-minute lunch break, it's in this moment that a lot of people get triggered by their fears or

by their programming from past experiences and end up feeling mistrusting, resentful and angry with each other.

In this instance, Susie could have very easily gone to lunch with Otto and the two women and had a very enjoyable time. But she would have had a strong feeling that she had missed a great opportunity to do something that she loved to do and hadn't been able to for several months because we live in Ohio where it's cold during that time of the year. There might even have been some resentment if she had not gone swimming.

She also could have been jealous that Otto chose to go to lunch with two other women and not join her at the pool during that break.

Otto could have been judgmental about Susie passing up the opportunity to "network" with other seminar participants. He could have had resentment that she wasn't fully there to learn and to make the most out of the seminar.

What could have been a divisive situation turned into a demonstration of trust and love. We made the decision to get our needs met, we listened and honored each other's needs, and we were present and loving with each other.

Often, we are asked how you can have freedom in a conscious, growing partnership and still remain close and connected as a couple. One of those ways is to choose to create "miracle moments" in your relationships.

The reason we're calling these situations "miracle moments" is that for some of us, these situations can truly create "miracles" in creating love and trust in our relationships if we are open and conscious enough to recognize the possibility and potential in these moments.

In relationships, big destructive acts can tear down trust between two people, but it's usually a culmination of many moments that make our relationships great (or not.)

Trust comes from creating “miracle moments” by learning to communicate from your heart and from what you are feeling in a way that can be heard by others. Trust is built one moment at a time.

Chapter 5

Assumptions -- How they Cause Mistrust in Relationships

By Dr. Belinda Gore

One of the major problems most people encounter in relationships is one we may not recognize: it is the tendency to make assumptions about what people mean by their words and behavior rather than to practice good communication skills. As a result, we are often hurt or angry by what we assume our partners mean and our partners are hurt or angry about being falsely accused or misunderstood.

During the past twenty years in practice as a psychotherapist, working with people in relationships, I have developed a simple yet highly effective method that can help you in developing healthier and more satisfying relationships. It is a simple process for improving your ability to communicate.

Many of us assume that other people think and feel just like we do. The problem with this assumption is that it ignores the fact that our personalities are structured somewhat differently, making it impossible to interpret the things other people say and do as if they were our own words and behavior. For example, while Janet is usually very aware of the qualities and characteristics that make her unique in the world, when it comes to relationships she tends to believe that she knows what the other person is thinking. She does this in a subtle way that makes it difficult for her to recognize. Take her relationship with her supervisor, Margaret. Margaret always dresses well, has a good manicure and nicely styled hair. Janet tends to say to herself, "Margaret thinks she is so much better than I am. That makes me so angry." It is possible that instead of expressing a sense of superiority, Margaret might be feeling insecure about her job and is trying to present a good appearance in order to cover up the fact that she is not sure of herself. Because Janet believes that Margaret is just like her in

terms of how she processes her experiences, she comes to a conclusion that is pretty far off the mark.

We all have to learn to recognize assumptions when they first arise and to question them, first in our own heads—Janet might learn to say to herself, “Maybe Margaret doesn’t think she is better than me”—and then to find a way to check our impressions with the other person. In addition, we need to understand ourselves in greater depth so that we can recognize our own traits that we are projecting onto the important people in our lives.

The Enneagram system is one of several useful methods for understanding personality types, or patterns around which we organize our thoughts and feelings. In the Enneagram there are nine major personality styles. The model is built on the various ways in which the ego or personality develops, beginning with our earliest experiences in the world. As human beings we seem to be born with a predisposition to relate to one or both of our parents in a particular way. This early relationship pattern is not caused by the parents yet it sets up assumptions that are used unconsciously as the model for relating to other key people throughout our lives. It is very important for us to recognize our unconscious assumptions about other people or we are doomed to repeat the same pattern over and over again. Once we learn about ourselves, our own personality type, then we are ready to learn about how others might be different from us in their motivations.

The erroneous assumption that other people are just like me comes up regularly in marital therapy. Ron complains loudly, “Diane knows how important the football games are for me on Sunday afternoons and she makes plans to have her parents visit on Sundays just to get back at me for not helping her with the laundry.” Ron has a guilty conscience for not helping Diane fold the laundry, which contributes to his tendency to believe he knows what she is thinking. He is unwilling to believe her when she tells him that Sunday is the only day her parents can make the sixty-mile drive to visit with them. Part of good communication is checking out our assumptions about what other people are thinking and partly accepting that what they tell us is true.

Ron discovered that his personality style is the type known as the Peacemaker and that he recovers from the stresses of his work life by becoming a couch potato on Sunday afternoons. Because he is likely to express his anger indirectly, like scheduling something when his wife wants to make plans for an activity he does not enjoy, he assumes that she operates in the same way. We learned that Diane is a type known as the Loyalist. For her family connections give her a sense of security and belonging that is very important to her, so she wants to be sure to have time to visit with her parents on a regular basis.

The second major erroneous assumption is that other people SHOULD be like me, that I am right to expect others to adapt to my worldview. We are practicing this belief when we attempt to change another person “for his own good.” If you find yourself critical of how other people drive or prepare food or manage their finances, you are practicing this assumption. Dan, who has the personality type known as the Reformer, has fairly rigid ideas about the best way, or rather the right way, to do many things. At his best he can identify ways to improve upon how things are done and tries to make changes that benefit everyone. He is, for instance, committed to recycling and helps in organizing his neighborhood toxic waste cleanup. However, he can become petty in his views about cleaning up around the house and regularly has arguments with his wife about how to properly load the dishwasher. From his point of view he has a superior way of doing things that are good for the environment and his wife should pay attention and do it his way—or according to Dan, the right way.

This leads to the next erroneous assumption, that my view of the world is accurate, that I have evidence that my fears and desires, my opinions, are justified. In some ways assumptions can be self-fulfilling prophesies. Rachel is an Achiever in the Enneagram system and her personality is built around the belief that she must perform well in order to be respected. This is not an unrealistic belief but she pushes herself to be the best in all situations because she unconsciously fears that she will not be loved if she cannot maintain the image of being successful. She interprets various life experiences to support this belief. Modern physics helps us in understanding that what we observe is influenced by ourselves as the observers. So when

Rachel points out that her success in business is what attracted her current fiancé, she is both right and wrong. Eric did begin to take notice of her as a striking young woman who was a successful entrepreneur in her early thirties. However, he is clear that his decision to marry her is based on experiencing her vulnerabilities as well as her strengths. Rachel assumes that letting Eric see her fears will cause him to leave her in disgust. Sadly, this openness that she struggles against is exactly what will create a deeper emotional bond between them.

The fourth erroneous assumption that interferes with good relationships is the belief that "I can trust my instincts about how to have a good relationship." It is difficult for me as a therapist to have to challenge the belief that the role modeling provided by my clients' parents or other key people will always serve them well. Sometimes people will say something like, "My parents always handled their arguments this way and it worked for them." First, parents often have different personality types from their children so what works for them may not work so well for their offspring. And then we have to assess whether the fact that they have been married for forty-seven years means that they have a good relationship. If we trust our instincts alone, we may persist in trying to force our relationships into a mold that does not fit, just like Cinderella's step-sisters trying to make their feet glide into that glass slipper.

The last assumption is "if we really love each other, our relationship should be easy," as though true love provides for never having to work things out. Many times clients have said, "This must not be the right person. Marriage shouldn't be so much work." Actually the opposite may be true: the more intimate a relationship, the more it will trigger the deepest recesses of our fears and desires. The commitment we make in a marriage is to stick around to identify and deal with the difficult issues. We can commit to creating a safe emotional environment in which to explore our true feelings and find resolution to the conflicts that plague us.

One of the best ways to establish a safe environment within a relationship is to practice basic skills in good communication. The process I teach in therapy has three simple steps. It is easy to remember because it

references the three major parts of our bodies: head, heart, and belly. The first step, based on the head center, is to share what you think. As you share your point of view, take responsibility for the fact that yours is only one of several possible perspectives. Like the blind men with the elephant, the truth has many aspects and the part you have hold of is only part of the truth. If you are holding the trunk of the elephant you might say it is like a snake, but that is accurate only in describing one part of the whole animal. Start your first statement with "It seems to me..." or "My opinion is that..."

Follow a statement of your thought about the matter with a simple statement that shares your emotion, from your heart. While there are many feeling words, the most basic are ones that can be summarized this way: sad, mad, glad, alone, and afraid. Try to discipline yourself to use only one or more of these five words. In common practice, people misuse the words "I feel" by saying "I feel that..." which is a thought, not an emotion. Also, to use a word ending in "ed" expresses being a victim not having a feeling. Compare "I feel cheated" with "I think you tried to cheat me and I feel angry."

The last step is to then ask directly and clearly for what you want: "I think you tried to cheat me and I feel angry. What I would like is to sit down with you and review how we made this financial agreement." For this kind of communication to work, you cannot wait until you are furious and ready to explode, because by then you cannot calmly ask for what you want. Couples are challenged to learn to use this three-step method for communicating by beginning with simple situations first. Often if the simple things are adequately dealt with, complicated problems arise less frequently. Nevertheless, within every personality type we have critical issues that will surface no matter how well we communicate. When that occurs, however, good communication skills will provide us with better tools for resolving those crises.

When my husband gets really angry, my automatic response is to fall into my little girl mode and become frightened and try to placate him. Or I might move into my Amazon mode and want to walk away, telling myself that I can get along just fine without him and his silly anger. However,

because he has done a good job of communicating with me in the past, I understand that his deep anger is more about his old issues than it is directed toward me. What he really wants is for me to just stay present, quietly accepting him, anger and all. When I do that, he begins to calm down on his own and then we can talk about whatever it was that triggered his angry reaction.

Relationships require time and attention, and when we are willing to do our part with recognizing erroneous assumptions and replacing them with accurate communication, the results can be rich and deeply satisfying.

About the Author:

Belinda Gore, Ph.D., offers workshops and training around the country based on the Enneagram system for personal growth and professional development, and is the Director of The Enneagram Institute of Central Ohio. You can visit her site and join her free newsletter list at <http://www.enneagram-ohio.com>

For more information about learning about the nine Enneagram personality types, you can take a short questionnaire at no charge at <http://www.enneagram-ohio.com> and then read about the nine types. The short version of the questionnaire does not provide a thorough assessment but can introduce you to the Enneagram system. There is a reading list and links to other sites if you want to explore further.

Chapter 6

Relationships Are Built on Trust

by Leslie Karen Sann, MA, LCPC

<http://www.living-bydesign.com>

Trust is one of the rewards of keeping agreements. Agreements play a very large role in our lives and in our ability to create clear and healthy relationships.

Most people don't realize that every agreement we make, we make first with ourselves – and sometimes they include other people. When we keep our agreements, we experience the rewards of enhanced self-esteem, increased self-confidence, clarity, vitality, and a greater sense of self-trust. When we keep our agreements with others, our relationships benefit. We are seen as trustworthy, and there is more aliveness in our relating.

When we break our agreements we experience a diminishment in self-trust, self-esteem, self-approval, self-respect, as well as fatigue, confusion, and self-doubt. Others see us as untrustworthy, and relationships deteriorate as a consequence.

Relationships are built upon a network of agreements. When promises are broken - trust is eroded - relationships deteriorate - productivity and well-being are diminished - and struggle ensues.

If one of your intentions is to experience the flow of ease, love, and trust in your life, and in your relationships, and you find yourself struggling instead, I suggest you look at the area of agreements.

When we make an agreement, we are committing to a future action. In doing so we commit ourselves to three areas: sincerity, competence, and reliability. These three components embody the domain of trust.

Sincerity

Sincerity is the assessment that the person is revealing and not concealing.

Look at the following example. Notice which statement elicits trust or distrust:

- Used Car Salesman: This car has been thoroughly looked over and we have found it to be in excellent condition. I guarantee you will love this vehicle. Trust me.
- Used Car Salesman: This car has been checked over. As far as I can tell it is in good condition. You can talk to the mechanic if you want. The truth is we really don't know about any used car, we can only give our best guesstimate.

Truth telling, honesty, revealing, feed trust. Withholding, hiding, omitting, diminish trust.

Competence

The fact that you are sincere does not make you competent. Can you do what it is you say you will do? Competence is the assessment that the person is capable of doing what it is they say they are going to do at the level of satisfaction agreed upon.

I wouldn't let the 8 year-old boy next door change the oil in my car. I would, however, let him shovel my walk.

I wouldn't ask my husband to re-shingle the roof. I'd hire a roofer instead.

I wouldn't offer to do estate planning for anyone, as that is not my area of competency. I would offer relationship coaching, as that is an area of expertise for me.

Often in relationships we set up a breakdown by agreeing to do something in an area of our incompetence, or asking someone who is not capable to perform at a level they are unable.

Reliability

Based on past history do I assess you as reliable? WILL you carry out the promise to fulfillment?

Someone who is consistently late cannot be relied upon, and are not trusted to do what they say they are going to do. If I don't pay my bills on time, it will be difficult to secure a mortgage. When we don't keep our agreements we are seen as unreliable.

These commitments of sincerity, competence and reliability make agreements extremely powerful. They allow us to rely on the promises made to us and to take action based on the fact that we can rely on those agreements. This is the basis of ease and flow in relationships.

Whenever any of these assessments is missing, **trust** becomes an issue.

Increasing Trust in Relationships

We can learn to become more trustworthy. We can look at the components of sincerity, competence, and reliability and improve our behavior in these areas.

Ask yourself the following:

- Do I reveal rather than conceal. Do people assess that what I say to them is what I really mean? Am I sharing my inner reality with those people who are important to me? Am I saying yes when I mean no, or vice versa?
- Am I making agreements I can deliver? Am I competent to do what I say I'm going to do?
- If I'm not competent, am I willing to learn?

- If I'm not willing to learn, (I am not willing to learn how to give my car a tune up), then am I willing to delegate the task to another? Or do I agree and then not deliver at the level that would satisfy the parties involved?
- Do I say I will do things and not follow through?
- Do I say I won't do things and I do them anyway?
- Can people count on me? Am I seen as reliable? If not, why not?
- Do I renegotiate my agreements BEFORE I break them, or do I find myself defending and justifying why I didn't keep my promise?
- Am I setting other people up to break their agreements with me?

Making and Keeping Agreements

Is it possible to keep all agreements? Perhaps, but most of us live in a world that has its own agenda, and sometimes life doing what life does gets in the way. Yet there are some guidelines to follow for taking better care of yourself when it comes to practicing greater excellence in the area of agreements. In doing so, you will be taking care of yourself and are contributing to balance and harmony in your relationships.

- Keep the agreements you have already made or consciously change them.
- In the future, only make agreements you want to make. Don't say yes when you mean no. Don't make agreements you don't want to make. No is better than a yes that never gets delivered.
- It is okay to make a counteroffer to a request being made. Negotiate the terms of your agreement up front. Tell the truth about what you can and cannot do, what you are willing and not willing to do.
- Take time to get clarity to understand the conditions of satisfaction of the agreement, making sure all parties agree upon criteria for completion

- Make sure the agreement has a time component -- by when will the promise be delivered?
- Renegotiate agreements you know are changing for you proactively (vs. after breaking one).
- Reschedule your agreements respectfully. There are at least two ways to do this: "Something more important has come up, so let's reschedule," or, "We have an agreement, and I'm willing to keep it, and I'd appreciate it if we could move it to another time because something important has come up." Which do you suppose is more accountable, courteous, and recommended?
- Be willing to keep your agreement if the other party responds by asking you to keep your agreement anyway.
- Keep all agreements impeccably - make your agreements important.
- Write down the agreements you make and keep track of them.
- When you break a promise, acknowledge it, tell the truth about it, and accept the consequences. Let go of justifications, apologies, and defenses.

Self-Trust is the Reward

Practicing excellence in the area of agreements will contribute vastly to the quality of your life, your level of energy and vitality, and to the health of your relationships.

Making and keeping agreement after agreement, you will build a strong foundation of self-trust and self-confidence. You will discover you can count on yourself, that you can commit, and that your commitment counts. You'll become increasingly trustworthy, credible, steady, and true - true to yourself. Until you are true to yourself, you cannot be true to another.

Your word is precious and powerful. It serves to be aware when you give it.

About the Author:

Leslie Karen Sann, MA, LCPC

As an educator, coach, and counselor for almost two decades, Leslie has supported thousands of people to create the life they really want by harnessing their genius and expressing their gifts. She publishes a free e-newsletter through which she inspires and motivates readers to live creatively from the integrity of their essence. To receive your copy, sign up at her website <http://www.living-bydesign.com>

Chapter 7

Designing for Trust

By Layne & Paul Cutright

People yearn for relationships they can trust. They want to be able to depend on people. They want relationships characterized by ease, clarity and harmonious cooperation.

The hallmark of an enlightened partnership is intentional design. Great relationships don't just happen, mediocre ones do. If you are like most people, you yearn for relationships you can trust. You want to be able to depend on people. You want relationships characterized by ease, clarity and harmonious cooperation. The good news is it is easier than you think. With a little bit of education and skill you can design relationships that foster trust through clarity and agreement.

Clarifying the purpose of your relationship and crafting agreements is a foundational part of the design process for generating trust. The conversations you will have will illuminate what is truly important to each person. This knowledge is essential in creating relationships that work well over the long term. If you create agreements that reflect the authentic motivation of each person and you plan for predictable breakdowns in a way that fosters accountability, you can relax into a new certainty and trust in your most important relationships.

What Is an Agreement?

What is an agreement really? An agreement is a method for coordinating action between two or more people. It is supposed to smooth the way for efficient harmonious interaction. But why do people so often not live up to their word? Usually an agreement fails because it does not reflect the true desire and motivation of all the people making the agreement. People who agree to something because they are afraid of what will happen if they don't

agree, will more than likely not follow through, unless they are pressured to do so.

It is important to know that agreements alone will not secure the safety and dependability we all yearn for. For an agreement to be effective the internal motivator that drives it should be so compelling that the people involved are aroused to fulfill their part of their own volition. In other words, an agreement you can count on has to come from the right place.

Why Am I Agreeing to This?

That means that each person must answer the question, "For the sake of what am I agreeing to this?" This reason needs to be explicit. You can't assume the same thing motivates everyone. You have to question, discuss and clarify. Successful agreements are always driven by a clear purpose that inspires action. There are two very important things that need to be part of a process for creating agreements that will work, a clear and inspiring purpose for your agreements and a process for restoring trust when an agreement has been broken.

A good purpose statement for sharing household chores might be something like, *"We agree to share in household chores so that we can enjoy a relationship that is free from resentment and filled with trust, intimacy, passion and fun!"* For business agreements something like, *"The purpose of the following agreements is to ignite an unstoppable force for imagination, creativity and collective accomplishment."* It is also a good idea to post this declaration in a place where it will be seen frequently by the participating members, e.g., refrigerator, coffee room, bulletin board.

Once you have crafted an inspiring purpose statement for your agreements and you have listed the agreements, check to see that all the agreements are consistent with your purpose. Then you need to determine a protocol for handling the inevitable broken agreement. This protocol needs to be something everyone accepts and is willing to use.

Agreements Aren't Always Kept

Yes, it may be sad but true that even with the best intentions, sometimes agreements aren't kept. You agree to be on time and you get a flat tire. You agree to handle dinner tonight and you feel ill or exhausted from the day. The best kind of protocol is one that quickly restores trust and completely neutralizes any disappointment or hard feelings. This is important because we want to make sure the memory of the event doesn't carry forward any resentment, blame or guilt. Any of these feelings are toxic to a harmonious future.

We have found that using amendments to restore broken agreements is a stellar solution. When someone does not keep an agreement for whatever reason, they offer an amendment to the other person. It is much better if someone does not have to ask for an amendment, but the person who did not keep the agreement readily offers it.

Apologies and Amendments

An amendment is different from an apology. An apology includes saying "I'm sorry" and how you will handle things differently in the future. An amendment is something you do to make up for whatever disappointment or bad feeling happened when the agreement was not kept as promised. An amendment is not a punishment. It is an opportunity to restore trust. What you offer for an amendment depends on the intensity of inconvenience or distress the other person experienced because you did not keep the agreement as promised.

Imagine someone who is late for a meeting and says upon arrival, "I apologize for being late. I'm sorry you were kept waiting and wondering. How about I bring flowers for the front desk tomorrow to make up for it?" Offering an apology and an amendment is a winning combination. It is a very grownup move that rekindles trust and allows everyone involved to bounce back to a very high level of teamwork.

Amendments work best when they are pleasurable for everyone involved. Treating someone to lunch is a better amendment than cleaning their car, unless of course you enjoy cleaning cars. Buying flowers tomorrow is better than doing a big thing in two or three weeks.

No Big Deal?

Sometimes people want to pretend that the agreement being broken was "no big deal" and an amendment is not necessary. We caution you against reacting this way consistently. It sends the wrong message. It is important for people to keep their word, to be accountable for their promises. The ill feelings that come from broken agreements can build up over time. Using amendments is a great way of averting the kind of disastrous blow-ups that happen when people get fed up.

It is a good idea to bring a light heart, a sense of humor and your creativity to the amendment process. Remember the purpose of an amendment is to restore trust and harmony to a relationship.

Written Agreements or Verbal Agreements?

Sometimes people balk at the idea of written agreements. It seems like too much trouble. But if you take a step back and look at most of the failures in your relationships you will probably notice most of them came from lack of clarity and alignment. How many times have you had a different recollection of a conversation than the other person having the conversation? It is one of the most common problems in relationships, having different perceptions of the same event. If the agreements are written down, you won't spend time arguing about them. Also, if everyone involved in creating the agreements is clear enough to write them down, chances are they know what they are and understand them. We are not talking about every agreement you ever make in the relationship, but most certainly the ones that lay the foundation for your relationship.

Here is an agreement crafted by two clients with the help of our coaching. We think you will agree that the clarity and strength shines through.

Our Relationship

The purpose of our relationship is to love, trust and nurture one another so that we both grow and achieve our full potential as soul mates, lovers and friends.

We promise to ...

- Have fun together
- Share passion and fulfill each others sexual desires
- Focus on things that we appreciate about one another and acknowledge them
- Experience the things we have loved as if we were doing them for the first time
- Treat each other with kindness and respect
- Create a relationship where we can experience peace and contentment
- Be lighthearted and not take ourselves too seriously
- Experience unconditional love
- Appreciate our strengths and accept our faults
- Communicate openly and freely with ultimate trust and truth
- Celebrate the relationship as the most important thing in our lives
- Laugh a lot!!!
- Share trust, love, intimacy to the deepest level possible
- Have dreams together and share the journey of them coming true

In order to fulfill these promises we will...

- Make time for that "Start the Day Hug"
- Spend 10 to 30 minutes a day for Couple Time and Alone Time
- Make our love visible with notes and cards
- Spend a minimum of 2 weekends per month alone together
- Have 1 relationship night per week
- Enjoy regular "Holding Time" – 5 minutes or more each day
- Share 2 energy or visualization sessions per week
- Have 2 Heart to Heart Talks per week
- Weekly "Support Review"
- Review our triggers once a month
- Pick a picture on the relationship creation boards and talk about what it feels like to achieve that
- Take turns planning a "Date Day" twice per month

We agree that we both will ...

- Make our relationship a priority
- Do whatever it takes to make our relationship mutually satisfying
- Acknowledge each other frequently
- Be emotionally supportive to one another
- Be personally responsible for our own experience
- Be honest in all ways
- Have the right to say no without losing each others love
- Create an environment conducive to love-making
- Have a period of intimate sharing before sex
- Be sensitive to each others needs and desires
- Be responsible for our own sexual satisfaction
- Communicate through any upsets until they are resolved to our mutual satisfaction
- Always tell the truth about our thoughts and feelings
- Be responsible in our communications, i.e. to speak in "I" sentences and to not cast blame
- Clear our resentments and upsets daily with each other
- Spend time looking into what's going on with ourselves first, e.g., using the CURE Upset Resolution Process in order to avoid blaming the other
- Seek outside support when we are stuck
- Learn from an upset
- Work on resolving unresolved issues from the past
- Agree that it is OK to disagree
- Not use these agreements to control or manipulate each other
- Be responsible for keeping these agreements and to use an amendment system to restore trust and harmony in case they are broken

We know that the purpose of these agreements is to help us continually enjoy the precious treasure that our relationship is with out any distracting discord or hurt feelings.

Clarity is Power

Can you imagine the conversations these two people would have had to write all that down? Do you think those conversations would have assured they were both on the same page with one another and they had a pretty good idea what they could count on one another for? Do you think they would have enjoyed a superior level of trust in their relationship with one another? You bet! And so would anyone else with the foresight to plan for success.

The whole process of crafting an agreement for your relationship should be enjoyable. Don't try and do it all in one day. Gather information through informal conversations that are mostly about getting to know one another. Then as the relationship is maturing you will see the right time to have a more formal conversation about designing your relationship for trust.

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About the Authors:

Paul and Layne Cutright are marriage and business partners who have been teaching principles and practices for successful relationships since 1976. They are the founders of **The Center for Enlightened Partnership** <http://www.enlightenedpartners.com>, an online learning and resource center providing education in High Performance Communication, Visionary Partnership Creation, Enlightened Conflict Resolution and Optimum Well Being.

They are authors of **Straight From the Heart** and **You're Never Upset for the Reason You Think, The CURE for the Common Upset**. You may order a complimentary five lesson e-Course, **How to Create Powerful Partnerships – The Five Essential Keys to Unlock the Hidden Potential of Any Relationship** (\$24.95 value) at <http://www.enlightenedpartners.com/ppecourse.html>

Chapter 8

Trust and Your Long-Distance Relationship

By Leslie Karsner, Ph.D.

Love might exist at first sight, but trust is created over time...and, when necessary, over distance.

Most people don't choose to be away from the one they love; circumstances can often cause separation.

For some couples, being in a long-distance relationship is the result of how they met, a temporary state until they can live together. For others it's business travel that keeps them apart on a regular basis. Regardless of the reason for being apart, building a strong foundation of trust is the key to success.

Even when couples live together in the same town, distrust can surface; but when the relationship is long-distance, the matter gets more complicated. Trust will diffuse paranoia and jealousy, two impulses which can be especially destructive from afar.

And you don't have to live in different towns to be left wondering about what your lover is up to; the shortest business trip can bring doubts.

Worry no more – help is here!

For years I have been coaching couples in long-distance relationships. As a result I have discovered 5 ways to build and maintain trust, no matter the distance.

These 5 ideas should help you romance your lover from afar, for reaffirming your commitment, for keeping the flame going strong – that’s your best defense against wandering eyes...your lover’s as well as your own.

1. Love Letters

The purest expression of love can be getting your thoughts down on paper (or into an e-mail) and into your lover’s hands. It’s something they can hold forever. Yet for some, the thought of writing a love letter presents a bit of a challenge. To make it easy, try writing just like you talk, as if it were a conversation. You might even consider speaking into a tape recorder and then transcribing your thoughts. Or read through some famous love letters for a little inspiration.

If writing a love letter comes easily to you, reminisce on your past experiences, and ponder your feelings deeply before putting your thoughts down. Give love letters often. Your lover can re-read your love letters whenever feeling those pangs of doubt. The more love letters they have to read, the more nurtured they’ll feel. Your love letters will serve as reinforcement, and further solidify trust in your relationship.

2. Gifting

Before parting, stash something in your lover’s suitcase. During business trips have something special delivered to your honey’s hotel room. Those little keepsakes serve as constant physical reminders of your love. Taking the time to do something special, whether it’s a handmade gift, or a considerate gesture, encourage feelings of love. It’s love in action! This is where effort, not wallet size, really counts.

Putting forth time and energy is a gift in and of itself. Knowing that your lover spent time doing something to brighten your day reinforces the fact that you’re thinking about them when apart. And it’s especially during those times at a distance, that a little something can warm the heart. So keep those care packages coming. (For more ideas, there’s an entire chapter devoted to ‘care packages’ in [The Long Distance Romance Guide](#).)

3. Consistent Communication

If you can't physically touch one another, then make an extra effort to stay in touch. Use the telephone, e-mail, postal mail, faxes, etc. With the advent of cell phones, there's no excuse not to stay close in contact. Be dependably regular in your correspondences. Consistency is key in building trust in any relationship, and even more important when distance is involved.

Some couples set aside a special time at the end of the day to chat by phone, while others choose to e-mail first thing in the morning. Find the style of communication, frequency and time of day that works best in your romance, and stick to it. If you aren't going to be able to call, let your lover know in advance. Simple considerations like this will eliminate any cause for concern or unnecessary worry.

4. Long-Distance Lovemaking

You might be falling asleep under separate roofs, but you can still make love...to one another. When you and your far-off lover remember that sex is 90% mental, keeping one another satisfied becomes a matter of creativity. Research for my book, [Long-Distance Lovemaking](#), opened my eyes to the many exciting options for staying satisfied when apart.

Start simply by discussing an in-person lovemaking experience you both enjoyed over the phone. Talking about why it was so wonderful will also help to deepen your understanding of one another's needs and desires. Things get to become pretty creative after that, incorporating the many technologies at your disposal. Greater physical intimacy and deeper communication go hand in hand, strengthening your bond and trust. After all, a satisfied lover has no interest in looking elsewhere.

5. Collect LDR Tips

Don't try to invent what works in LDR's – others have already been there and mapped out the best tips. Search the Internet for ideas, talk with other couples in LDRs, visit chat rooms, read books (like my newest e-book, [LDR Tips](#)), collect clippings from magazines, etc. Store your favorite tips in a folder, on your computer or PDA. Keep them easily accessible and portable for when you travel. Occasionally review your collection to find the perfect idea to spark romance, make your lover feel nurtured, or create closeness across the miles.

Continue to build trust by revisiting these 5 ideas regularly.

Absence can make the heart grow fonder, and out of sight need not mean out of mind, so long as those nagging questions about commitment and fidelity are answered regularly and romantically.

You can't force someone to be faithful; the delight of your romantic spirit should leave them with no other choice but to long only for you!

My own LDR turned into a same-city marriage because we both knew the other was worth the effort. Yet even now that we live together, business and family matters still take us away from one another more than we'd like, so I still use the 5 tips myself.

Across the miles you can not only continue building a trusting bond, you can actually grow closer.

Now, go romance your far-off lover!

About the Author:

Leslie Karsner, Ph.d., author of *The Long Distance Romance Guide* and *Long Distance Lovemaking*, is acknowledged as the world's leading authority on how to sustain a happy relationship - at a distance. She has helped thousands of couples who travel for business or live in different cities to stay close even when they're apart. Featured in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, *Men's Health*, *The New York Times*; and hundreds of other television shows including a famous interview by Bryant Gumbel,

her books and e-books on long-distance relationships are available at
<http://www.GoRomance.com>.

Click here to receive creative & unique tips sure to enhance the romance in your
life:
<http://www.goromance.com>

Rebuilding Trust When It's Been Broken

Chapter 9

How to Rebuild Trust When It's Been Broken

By Susie and Otto Collins

What do you do if trust has been broken and you want to you start healing it?

If this is a relationship that is important to you, the most crucial thing that you can do at this point is to determine what's going on within you and then ask yourself this question...

“What do you want to happen next in your relationship?”

This is an important question because after the initial shock, anger, and possibly rage have surfaced, then you have a choice to make.

If you want to heal the trust issue, the goal is to acknowledge the pain and hurt as quickly as possible for exactly what it is (no more and no less) and not wallow in being a victim or a martyr so you can move more quickly to begin the healing process.

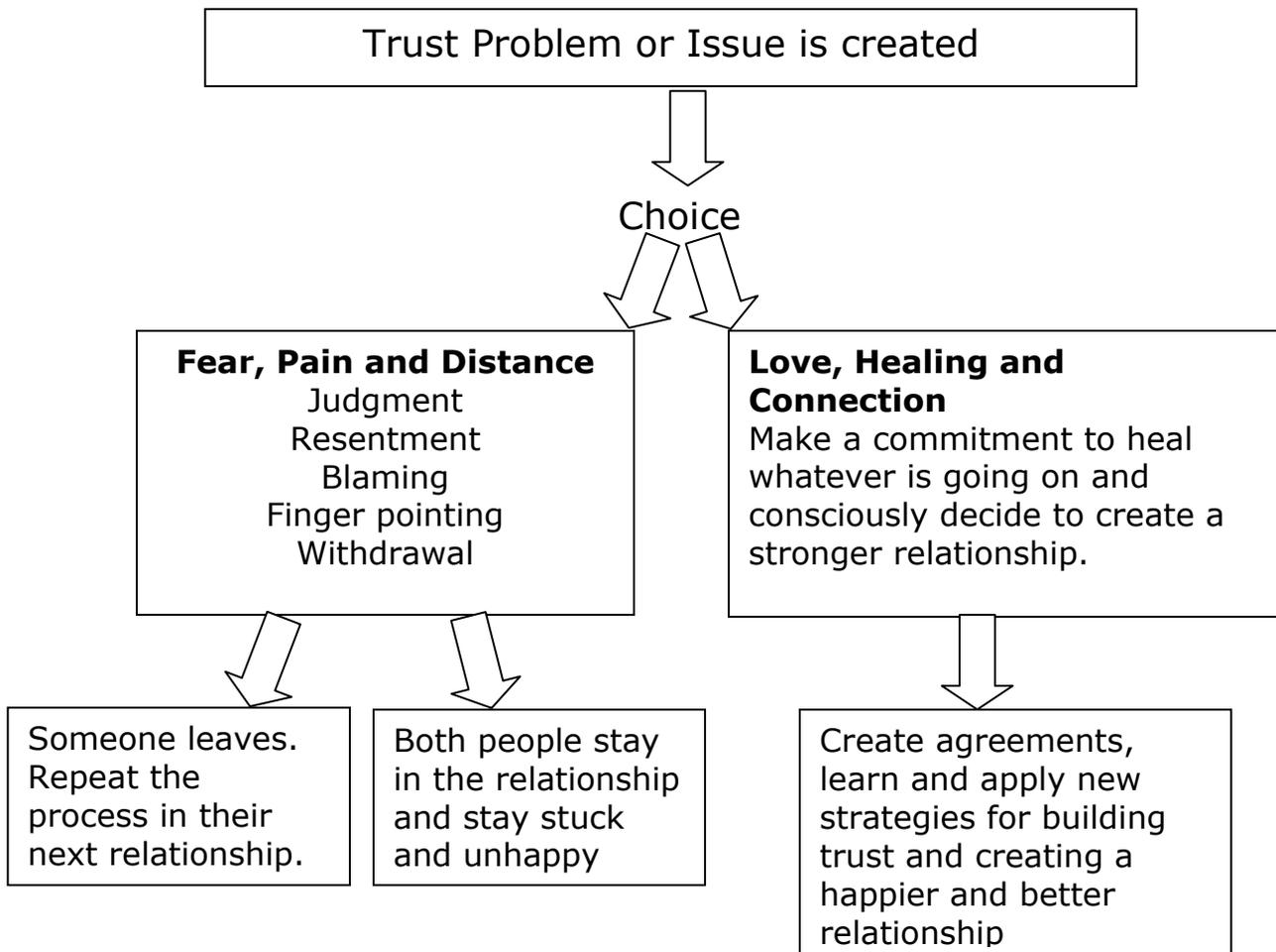
As the following diagram shows, what you choose to do next will either consciously or unconsciously move the two of you closer together or move you further apart.

When trust has been violated, whether it's a small issue or a large one, you only have two choices and two paths you can take—

1. Fear, Pain and Distance, which usually means judgment, resentment, blaming, finger pointing, and withdrawal. This choice either leads to someone leaving and the same pattern

is repeated in another relationship or both people stay in the relationship and stay stuck and unhappy.

2. Love, Healing and Connection which involves making a commitment to heal whatever is going on and consciously deciding to create a stronger relationship. This choice usually leads to both people creating agreements and applying new strategies for creating a happier and better relationship.



What are you committed to?

Are you committed to Fear, Pain and Distance or to Love, Healing and Connection?

Committing to love, healing and connection does not mean that you are never going to feel fear, pain and distance or that you are a failure if you do.

Most of us feel fear, pain and distance at some time or other in our relationships. What it does mean is that when you find yourself slipping into old patterns of acting out or closing down because of fear and pain (like April in Chapter 2) that you choose a different, more positive approach that will bring you the healing, love and connection that you want.

If loss of trust has happened because of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, the first step to choosing Love, Healing and Connection means that this behavior has to stop. Only after both people get the help they need to stop the abuse can trust begin to be rebuilt and healing take place.

Can trust always be healed between two people if only one person chooses Love, Healing and Connection? There are no guarantees that the two of you will be together in the way you hope because it depends on both people's desire to do so. What we have found is that there is little or no chance of regaining and rebuilding trust if you hang onto the pain and fear.

With that being said, if you're interested in moving in the direction of connection and healing trust in your relationship, we think you'll find the following ideas and information helpful to you...

"I'm Sorry..."

We think that one of the keys to rebuilding trust has more to do with what happens after one or both of you apologizes and says "I'm sorry" than the apology itself.

There has to be a commitment from each person to change your relationship and do it differently. If there's no sincere apology and strategy for beginning to build trust between the two of you, there's no way to rebuild trust. If the other person isn't open to hearing your apology and moving on, then there's no way trust can build between you.

We've all heard the saying, "Actions speak louder than words" and this is especially true when it comes to rebuilding trust.

When there has been an acknowledgment of wrongdoing or if one person has hurt another in some way, there are some things that both people can do to rebuild trust.

Even if an incident happened many years ago, you may feel like it is still coming between the two of you and you are walking on "eggshells" trying very hard not to "rock the boat." We suggest that if there is that unnamed situation in your relationship, take the courage and tackle it because if you don't, it will create greater havoc if you let it simmer in resentment and distrust.

Here are some ideas to help you tackle it--

Are you the person who feels they have been hurt? Here are some suggestions for you...

1. No matter how tough or how much you've been hurt, agree to listen and allow the other person to speak without interrupting.
2. Assuming there's an apology, tell the person how their actions made you feel but keep to how you are feeling and not how bad this other person is for doing what he/she did. Be clear about what actions you would like the other person to take to make amends.
3. If the other person is willing, make an agreement about these actions and how this situation will be handled if it happens again in the future.

4. Be open to the possibility that no matter what this person's conduct may have been in the past, this person may change their behavior, unless of course you've been "around this bend" too many times and you see no signs of improvement.
5. Be willing to give up the "victim" position and the desire for making the other person pay for what they've done. Make sure that you don't say it's "okay" when it really isn't. Resentments will build and that will tear down trust just as severely as the original problem did. Take steps for forgiving the other person, not only for that person but for yourself as well.
6. Watch for positive actions by this person in the future and let them know how much you appreciate it when they've "done it right." In other words, give some positive reinforcement.

Are you the person who is attempting to apologize? Here are some ideas for you...

1. Understand that a sincere apology is only the first step toward rebuilding trust and your connection with that other person.
2. Ask for forgiveness and how you can make amends for what you have done. Agree to listen to what the other person is telling you about how they are feeling without getting defensive.
3. Be open to the possibility that you can change and get some help if you need to.
4. If you are sincerely willing to change your behavior in the way that the other person suggests, make an agreement to make those changes.
5. Be consistent in your follow through.

If both people are choosing to reconnect in this relationship, it's really important for them to leave the past in the past and agree to start over.

If you were to actually start this relationship all over again, what would you do? How would you create your relationship? When you are answering these questions, share openly with each other what you want and what's important to you. Ask yourselves, "If we didn't have a past together, how would we be in this relationship?"

What better confirmation of trust then to say to each other, "I choose you in this moment" and "I am choosing you to be with." We've found that rebuilding trust can take many years or it can happen more quickly.

The amount of time that it takes to rebuild trust often depends on how long the people involved are determined to protect and defend their hearts so that they won't be hurt again.

Stumbling blocks...

One stumbling block to creating a close, connected relationship after there's been a violation of trust is when a person either wants to change but just can't and isn't willing to get help or he/she has no desire to make the changes that will rebuild trust. Either no apologies are ever made or he/she just goes through the motions with excuses and apologies that are repeated over and over with no positive change. If this is what's happening in your relationship, you may want to get our book "Should you stay or Should you go?" by going to <http://www.stayorgo.com> to explore your options.

Another stumbling block to reconnection can be if the person who was "wronged" holds onto the victim position because it's familiar, because that's the way their mother or father lived their lives or from any number of other reasons. Whatever the reason, they are unwilling to let go of the incident in their minds and relive it over and over, even if the other person seems to be making positive changes in the present moment.

In either of these scenarios, people can get into a locked or frozen position and neither is able to move on to creating the type of relationship that they want.

If either of these stumbling blocks is what you are experiencing, you have choices to make whether you want to remain locked in your position and live in an unhappy relationship or if you want to start today to create a connected, alive relationship. You can make the choice on your own but if this relationship is to be what you want it to be, it takes both people making a commitment to do so.

If you are making the choice to have a connected, loving relationship on your own without your partner's cooperation and commitment, you may have the choice of whether to stay with that partner or not.

Remember, that no matter what has happened up until now, it's always important to give love a chance. It's also equally important to listen to yourself and to set healthy boundaries when circumstances are putting you in an unsafe or dissatisfying situation.

Trust in a relationship doesn't start with someone else. It starts with you and how willing you are to open up and allow the other person in. In order for trust to grow in a relationship, it takes both people committing to allowing each other in.

Rebuilding trust can seem like an insurmountable task but if both people are committed to creating a connected relationship, take it one step, one moment at a time.

Chapter 10

Mending Broken Trust

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Dylan and Hannah were to be married in a month when Hannah found out that Dylan had been cheating on her with another woman. Devastated, she ended their relationship.

Dylan was also devastated. He really loved Hannah and had no idea why he had been having an affair with a woman who meant nothing to him. Fortunately, Dylan reached out for help and started phone sessions with me. In the course of his Inner Bonding work, he discovered deep feelings of worthlessness from a highly abusive childhood. He had learned to define his worth through women and sex, and was addicted to the validation he received from women. He had no idea how to fill and validate himself and was driven to appease his fear and anxiety through sex with multiple women.

Dylan also discovered that he was terrified of being controlled due to his angry and controlling mother, and having an affair was a way to protect himself from this fear. Hannah frequently used anger as a way to have her way and Dylan had never learned how to stand up for himself, having learned to be a caretaker for his parents. Withdrawing into his addiction was the only way he knew of not being controlled.

While Dylan believed in God, he had no connection with a personal source of spiritual guidance. As he learned and began to practice the six steps of Inner Bonding and developed his spiritual connection, Dylan began to fill up from the inside instead of having always to fill up from the outside. Dylan was diligent regarding his Inner Bonding work, and within a short time, he knew that his sexual addiction was behind him. He had no more desire to act out sexually. He loved Hannah and just wanted to be with her.

Dylan was also healing the old guilt from his parents' blame and abuse. He was learning to stand up for himself rather than let himself be controlled, to speak his truth rather than comply out of fear and guilt to another's demands.

At this point, he contacted Hannah. She was still hurt and furious and had no trust in him at all. However, she still loved him, and was confused about what to do. Her family and friends advised her to stay away, but she heard something new in Dylan's voice that compelled her to open up a bit. She started phone sessions with me as well.

"I love him but how can I ever trust him again?" she asked over and over. Instead of working on trusting Dylan, we worked on Hannah learning to trust herself. As we went back through the relationship, it became apparent to Hannah that she had been ignoring the inner promptings that told her something was wrong. She had not trusted her own inner knowing. Out of fear of conflict, she had let many events go by that, if she would have confronted them, would have shed light on the problems much earlier. Instead of speaking her truth, she had learned to get angry as a way to protect against her fears of rejection. Hannah worked on developing her spiritual connection with a source of guidance that helped her begin to trust her inner knowing. As she stopped abandoning herself and learned how to take care of herself so that she no longer needed to control Dylan to feel safe, her anger subsided.

Meanwhile, Dylan went about proving his trustworthiness. He was not only attentive and kind to Hannah, he became generous and kind with various members of his family, from whom he had previously distanced.

After a few months of individual work, Hannah and Dylan began to work together in their phone sessions with me. They learned to open and explore their conflicts and learn from them instead of Hannah getting angry and Dylan complying and withdrawing. In shifting their

intent from protecting against pain to learning about love, Hannah and Dylan developed a loving relationship based on trust for themselves and each other. They are now married with children and their relationship continues to evolve in love and trust.

Trust is built in a relationship when both people are open to learning rather than controlling through anger, withdrawal, compliance or resistance. When our intention is to control rather than to learn about what is loving to ourselves and our partner, we can never trust or feel secure with our partner, because if we can control and manipulate him or her, others can too - and that's scary. Only when we believe our partner is with us because he or she wants to be - out of desire and caring, rather than out of fear, obligation, or guilt - will we feel secure and trusting. This only occurs when our intent is to learn about loving ourselves and others rather than to control.

The more we trust ourselves - our own inner knowing and the wisdom from our spiritual guidance - the more open and trusting we can be with our partner. People often hold back from being open with their partners with the implication, "I can't be open until you prove that I can trust you." By trust they mean being able to predict their partners' response, guaranteeing that their partners will be loving rather than rejecting. One of life's hardest realities is that this kind of guarantee is impossible. However, the more we trust ourselves and develop our ability to speak our truth, the more we are willing to be open and risk another's free response to us. This is what creates a loving and trusting relationship.

About the Author:

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is a noted speaker, seminar leader, and Inner Bonding facilitator. She is the co-author of eight books including *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?*, *Healing Your Aloneness*, and author of *Inner Bonding* and *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By God?*

Website: <http://www.innerbonding.com>.

Chapter 11

A Little Thing Called Trust

By Terri Levine MCC, PCC, MS, CCC-SLP

In an ideal world, all children would be taught about matters of trust so that as adults, the simple art of trusting would not be the problem that it sometimes becomes. In a nutshell, to establish trust in any relationship requires honesty – trust is the first thing to go when lying and cheating become apparent. This is true whether dealing with a lying child, a deceitful partner or a dishonest co-worker.

But we all know what trust is and how easily it can be lost. The problem is how to re-establish trust once it has been broken.

How easy it would be if everyone was open and honest with each other at all times, and if everyone was reliable and dependable and “trustworthy”. But imperfection is part and parcel of being human. We learn from our mistakes, but think how terrible it would be if we were never given second chances and never trusted again simply because we erred once in our life!

Are you familiar with the old adage “honesty is the best policy”? Truer words were never spoken. Discovering that somebody has made a terrible mistake is one pill to swallow, but it becomes a bitter pill to discover they have not only made a mistake but lied to you about it or tried to cover it up. Because then it becomes much more than one person making a mistake... it’s one person who has made a mistake and added betrayal, dishonesty, and disrespect to the situation. Who do you think is easier to forgive? A person who has made a mistake and come to you and openly admitted it and apologized, or a person who has made a mistake and not told you about it so that you find out later and when questioned they lied to you?

If you have trouble trusting others, or somebody is having difficulty trusting you, the first step you need to take is be open and honest with them. Admit

you were wrong and apologize. If you are the one trying to do the trusting, let the other person know how you feel. Having trust requires having confidence in others and yourself. One cannot exist without the other. A dose of faith is often a useful ingredient too. After all, you have no “proof” you can trust a new friend, and all you can do is have faith that they won’t let you down and have confidence in them to not do so. Trust is established when you are satisfied that they are worthy of your confidence and faith. This is not to say this person will not commit mistakes, however, because to err is human, after all!

When trust is at stake, remember that significant others are not deliberately setting out to hurt you. Cover-ups are a result of fear. Ask yourself why is somebody afraid to be honest with you? How do you normally react? Like a screaming banshee? Sulky and manipulative? Abusive? Do you never let them forget it? Do you overreact? Sure, some mistakes are hurtful, for example, when a partner has been unfaithful. Rebuilding trust takes time and commitment. It requires mutual respect and caring for each other. If you can honestly forgive your partner for an indiscretion, then rebuilding trust will be so much easier.

You may feel vulnerable, placing your trust in others, and perhaps sometimes, your trust will be misplaced, but when those around you treat you fairly and honestly and are open with you, it seems unlikely that they would betray your trust in them. This is not to say that it doesn’t happen, and being careful doesn’t necessarily mean you are not being trusting. You don’t need to divulge your deep, dark secrets to somebody just because they are honest with you. Some honest and fair people are blabber-mouths! You need to use your own judgment and TRUST your own intuition.

Realize that some people cannot trust easily. Don’t take it personally – unless, of course, you have given them good reason not to trust you easily! People who have either grown up in a divorced or other type of dysfunctional family, or experienced put-downs or emotional hurts or been lied to or cheated to in the past, will carry this lack of trust into future relationships as a protective mechanism. When somebody has been hurt by another person, it can take a long while for the wounds to heal. If someone is so

unfortunate to experience this more than once, you can imagine how much longer it might take before they can trust anybody else again.

If you are such a person, that is, someone who has been so badly hurt that you believe you can never trust anyone again, there are some things you can do to heal the wounds and begin to trust again.

- Remember what goes around, comes around. Some people call this 'karma'. Some people call it the laws of cause and effect. Whatever you want to call it, know that it is real. If somebody has hurt you, know that they will "get theirs". Also know that if you hurt another, maybe someone who loves you very much and you cannot trust them, you will also get yours. There is no need to withhold your trust from every person on the planet just because one or even a handful has let you down in the past. Not everyone is rotten!
- Adopt a "let go, and let God" or similar type of saying guide you. Accept that a spiritual power who is much wiser than you may just have some divine plan for your life. Maybe, you had to experience some hurtful things in order to grow. So don't allow yourself to be stuck in the experience. Learn and move on.
- Where possible, communicate with those who have hurt you and try to understand what happened. This is not always easy or possible, in which case, try to put yourself in their shoes and imagine what could have made them behave the way they did. Nobody is perfect; not even you. If you wouldn't deliberately and knowingly hurt another, perhaps they wouldn't either and were not "themselves" when they hurt you. Maybe, they need more help than you do! In any case, you owe it to yourself to let go of whatever holds you back from trusting others again. There are many wonderful people in the world, and like you, they do not deserve to be treated with anything other than respect and dignity and offered trust.
- Respect and trust yourself. If you are not a "trustworthy" person, the first step is to recognize and acknowledge that part of yourself before you can do anything constructive about it. It may take many years, but every

journey begins with one step, and your first step is recognizing this about yourself. Only then can you take steps to overcome whatever it is that makes you an untrustworthy person. When you start to gossip, remember, and stop yourself. Change the subject, and if prompted, laugh it off and say you forgot what you were saying! Whatever your weakness, you CAN overcome it – but you must acknowledge it first.

- If you find yourself feeling sick with distrust about a new partner or friend, you do the same. You stop, recognize and acknowledge this. Then you rationally ask yourself whether you have a valid reason for the current mistrust or whether it is your old programming. If you can't find a real reason to validate your mistrust, then just let it go... It's okay, and it gets easier the more you do it.
- Take your meaningful relationships a step further by opening up and practicing the art of trust. It's a risk, but for a true relationship, it's well worth it. Use your head. Don't just open up to any person just for the sake of testing the waters... you will know, instinctively, whether somebody is trustworthy or not. Give people the benefit of the doubt... maybe they are trustworthy, and think how much damage you do to your potential happiness by not trusting them!
- Remember, we are all vulnerable. Find your inner strength and know that should somebody disappoint you again, you are strong enough to overcome it and move on. This is something every person does, every day. In a group of ten new friends, perhaps only five are truly trustworthy, but you won't know unless you open yourself up to them, and rather than think of the five who disappointed you, concentrate on the five who honored you and in whom you can openly trust.
- Let go of fear – yes, this is easier said than done. It takes practice. Start with the small things and build your way up and don't forget to congratulate yourself along the way. Many people fear rejection, ridicule, failure, and even success, and many people jeopardize their personal relationships because they don't want to be hurt again. Your tough exterior may seem to protect you, but in reality, it can't and doesn't.

What it does do is damage any chance you have of closeness and happiness with some significant other.

- Don't be hard on yourself. I repeat, nobody is perfect. We aren't expected to be. Accept yourself and accept others for who they are – warts and all. Some of us are trying very hard to change and we need your faith and belief in us that we can do it. This is not to say that you should let people walk all over you, abusing your trust and faith in them. Don't be anybody's doormat. Use your common sense. You CAN tell the difference between a true 'cad' and somebody who sincerely errs and is trying to mend their ways.

Ask yourself, if you are not feeling trust in a relationship, why are you feeling this way? Has the other person deserved your mistrust or are you acting on instinct, a protective mechanism... something you've bought into the future from your past?

What is behind your sense of mistrust? What reasons do you have? Can you validate them or are they "fears"?

What's the worst that can happen if you put your trust in this other person? If the worst came to pass, would it kill you? Could it make you stronger and wiser next time? It is always a personal choice to be defeated or to get up and move on...

Try writing a pretend letter to the person you mistrust. Include all your feelings and emotions. Tell them why you don't trust them. Tell them what you would like to be able to do to overcome this. Get it all off your chest, using whatever language you feel necessary to do so. The letter can be as long as you want or need it to be. You can repeat yourself if you want. When you have run out of things to write, read the letter you have just written – if you remember anything else you'd like to say, write it down... then... rip it up and throw it in the bin. You will find this is an excellent form of release... a healing... it really works.

Don't make people prove themselves before you will trust them. By all means, use your instinct and your common sense, but don't paint all people with the same brush. Just as all people are not thieves or adulterers, not all people are untrustworthy. It's a big beautiful world, full of many beautiful, kind and sincere people, just like you... alas, you'll never be friends with them if you can't let your guard down long enough to establish a trusting and honest relationship.

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Chapter 12

From Fear to Empowerment and Possibilities

By Susie & Otto Collins

One of the best ways to create trust in a new relationship or to rebuild it if it's been broken is to shift your attitude from lack and fear and open your heart to possibilities.

Too often when things don't go exactly how we think they should in our lives and people don't act the way we think they should, we mistrust them, withdraw or get angry and take on a life of resignation and wallow in quiet (or not so quiet) self-pity.

We've noticed that some people adopt the attitude of "this is as good as it gets and I'm just going to have to accept it."

We know from our own lives and experience that when it comes to your relationships, there is always hope and there are always new possibilities if you are willing to do what it takes to create your life and relationships the way you want them to be.

What we'd like to suggest to you about your relationships is that they can become as good as you're willing for them to be.

It all starts with your intentions and your attitude is a big part of that.

You can choose to become a "good-finder" in your current relationships and in your life or you can look for what you find distasteful or unpleasant in the people in your life. The choice is yours. One way builds trust and the other tears it down.

A lot of business people take the last couple of weeks in the year to review what's happened over the last 12 months and then create new goals and plans for making the coming year better.

We think this is a good way to build trust and possibilities in your personal relationships as well.

We invite you to take some time to figure out what's working in your relationships and life and what isn't.

In short, if you want to create closer and more loving relationships with the people in your life, there are certain things you're going to want to do more of and other things you'll want to do less of or eliminate all together

Ask yourself--"What kinds of things can I start doing (or do more of) to start creating trust in my relationship?"-- and focus on those things.

As someone said to Otto, there's always another way if you look for it. The trouble is that most of us don't look for it most of the time.

Instead of dwelling on what's not working, emphasize what is working in your life and relationships and be open to new possibilities that might come to you.

Listen to what Gail says about her friends and her new relationship...

"I find that I surround myself with people who have been burned in relationships and want to be in a good one now. When I hear them say that they 'want to be in one,' I think they're coming from lack and being a victim. It's coming from what didn't work in the past and there's the attitude that 'I'll never have a good one anyway, so why am I even trying?' They are willing to settle for a relationship that is mediocre or none at all. They trust that they will never have what they want in a relationship.

I have learned a lot from my friend who's been in a wonderful relationship for about a year. It's a very centered, open, committed and loving relationship, although she's gone through about 15 unhappy relationships to get to this one. She's like I am—she's learned from every one of them. When these relationships ended, instead of blaming the other person or feeling sorry for herself, she said, 'Okay, what I've learned in this relationship moves me closer to what I want.'

This friend and I are walking partners and this past year I've enjoyed listening to her talk about her relationship. As she's talked, I've had this virtual relationship going on with somebody although I didn't know him yet! I would get so excited when I would hear her tell about how great her relationship is that I literally could feel it. I think that positive energy has helped me attract someone different into my life because I haven't been jealous of her. I've just been excited about where she is."

When we asked Gail why she has a different belief from many of her friends that she can have the kind of relationship that she keeps reaching toward, she told us...

"I think it's just a deep knowing that I am going to have what I want. I believe that this is a path that I'm going on and all these people I've been with are part of the plan and underneath all of that, I really do have a knowing that someday I am going to have this relationship that I want. This may not be the one, the last one may not be the one but it's just some kind of knowing. I don't have this fear that I'm going to be alone the rest of my life.

People come to me when I need them to come to me. Everyone who's come to me, I've needed. Being with one of my boyfriends taught me how to stand up for myself. Everybody I've ever been with has contributed to my growth. But that's a shift. A lot of people I'm with can't do it that way yet. Like with Cynthia-- she's out of the men business. She's had 3 husbands and none of them amounted to anything. I've chosen to make the shift to value what ex-lovers and partners have given to me. Maybe that's why I've

been able to manifest partners because my attitude is about hope and gratitude in what I've learned from people in my past.

I think it's about taking ownership, taking responsibility because I have taken a look at everybody I've been with. What worked? Why did it not work? What part did I play in it? What did I learn from being in that relationship? I now look at my life as a steady progression. I couldn't do it in the moment but now I can look back and know what every relationship gave to me.

I spent years feeling like a victim. I trusted that I'd be the victim. That was the role I played. I could be the victim and years down the road I could tell my story about how I was abused or how I was not loved and that attracted someone else to me that allowed me to be another victim. That cycle was set up for a long time. I could then tell that story and move on to another one. Shifting out of that and taking responsibility for my own actions is what has created new people, different types of partners to come into my life.

I'm excited that I am where I am--that I don't have to manipulate to have people take care of me. I finally woke up the other morning and realized that I'm a person worth knowing. I've never felt that before. I think that shift makes a huge difference--that I'm worth it. If I'm worth it, the possibilities are endless and I'm excited about seeing what's going to happen next."

Did you hear how Gail shifted her attitude and beliefs to create excitement and possibilities in her life? She talks about taking responsibility for what happened in past relationships, learning from those relationships and being grateful to her past partners. She talks of having a "knowing" that she will be in the relationship that she wants and is open to possibilities in her life.

Atmosphere of Love

One way we've found to increase trust in your life is to create as Daphne Rose Kingma calls it, an "atmosphere of love" around yourself like Gail seems to have done.

So what is an atmosphere of love? One of the best ways we can describe it is by reminding you of its opposite.

We're sure that you've all experienced stepping into a room and having the feeling that the energy was so "thick" with anger, rage, sorrow or any number of intense emotions that you could "cut it with a knife."

When you create an "atmosphere of love," it's exactly the opposite. You are creating a presence around yourself this is inviting, alive, warm and giving. It is openness for possibilities and for trust to grow between two people.

Otto's sister creates an atmosphere of love around her. She always expresses that she's happy to see us when we get together. We feel welcomed and loved when we go to her home. She sends us cards of appreciation every now and then. There is a warm, open feeling of love in the room when we are with her.

If you want to create an atmosphere of love to attract more love and trust into your life, here are a few things that we do to create it in our home:

*We greet each other warmly and openly when either of us comes home, even after being away for only a short while.

*We often give each other hugs during the day or just touch.

*We try to really listen to each other and maintain eye contact while we do it.

*We laugh together at our "mistakes" or shortcomings and try not to blame each other.

*We try to honor how we are different and what blessings these differences bring to our lives.

Your “atmosphere of love” may look different from ours but if you create your list together and do whatever things you decide to put on your list, we think that you’ll find that your relationship and the trust between the two of you will change and grow.

Shifting your attitude from fear to empowerment is up to you. That certainly doesn’t mean that you do not look at situations honestly and close your eyes to what people are doing to create mistrust. It does mean choosing to be proactive in creating trusting relationships in your life and choosing love instead of fear.

Tactics and Strategies for a Relationship "Trust" Emergency

Chapter 13

What to do if your situation is a true "Trust" Emergency

By Susie and Otto Collins

If you are reading this book right now, there's a chance that you are in the middle of a full-blown "Trust" crisis or emergency.

We define a full-blown relationship "trust" crisis or emergency as:

Your current situation has deteriorated to the point that the erosion of trust is so great that the relationship is on the brink of dissolving. That can mean that one person has moved out of the house, has asked for a divorce, has been caught having an affair or in a major lie, one or both partners have been physically, emotionally or sexually abusive or any number of other reasons.

If something like this is happening in your life right now, we've written this chapter for you.

When something has happened to cause major trust issues in your relationship, what you do next determines whether you can and want to rebuild trust in the relationship or whether you and your partner should design a plan to leave the relationship with grace.

When there's a true trust "crisis," you have three choices:

- 1) To hold on to your fears, blame, judgment, being a victim, the need to be right for as long as you are in this relationship and even after it's over.

- 2) To make the decision to acknowledge your pain, heal yourself and decide that you cannot go forward in this relationship because the pain has been too great and you have no hope that the other person will act in good faith to rebuilt trust in this relationship.
- 3) To acknowledge the pain you have felt, look at your situation openly and honestly, and consciously decide, along with your partner, that your relationship is important enough to commit to doing whatever is necessary to healing it.

If you decide to hold on to your fears, blame, judgment, the need to be right, and stay shut down emotionally, it will be impossible for you to rebuild trust and start repairing this relationship.

On the other hand if you (and your partner) are both willing to make the commitment to do whatever is necessary to rebuild trust and save the relationship, it is possible, no matter how bad your situation appears to be right now.

In this chapter, we outline some action steps that you can take to begin to rebuild trust in your life, whether you are the person who has done something to destroy trust or you are the one who feels victimized.

If you have any possibility of rebuilding trust in this relationship, you have to act and you have to act soon. If you are in a full-blown relationship crisis, time is master. You cannot sit idly by and hope that your relationship will repair itself. It will not! This is not a time for excuses, withdrawing, retreating or dealing with it another day.

If a major trust crisis is underway in your relationship and you want to regain trust that's been lost, you have to begin taking positive steps toward healing it now.

A word of caution...

As we have said in an earlier chapter, if you are in a physically, emotionally or sexually abusive relationship and/or drug or alcohol addictions are involved, your first step is to stop the abuse and the addictions. Before trust can ever be rebuilt, both people usually need to get help to stop abusive or addictive behaviors and to learn how to be in relationships differently. So if this is you, get help now for yourself.

If you are the person who has “caused” the trust issue, here are our suggestions:

1. Calm down. You are not going to be thinking clearly if you are in a rage, hyperventilating, feeling overwhelmed, yelling, or throwing things. Breathe deeply in your belly in order to begin placing yourself in a space where you are clear and your intense emotions are not clouding your thinking.
2. As quickly as possible, take some time for introspection. Before you approach the other person in this relationship and attempt to repair the damage, it is important that you take some time to acknowledge to yourself what you have done to create this situation. As you are doing this, find out what is going on within you and find out what you are thinking and feeling.

Use the [“Power of Presence”](#) exercise in the Appendix of this book to help you get clear on what you are feeling.

Ask yourself this very important question:

“Am I willing to commit to doing whatever is necessary to rebuild trust?”

If you answer “yes” to this question and really mean it, rebuilding trust is possible if the other person is also willing to make this commitment.

If you answer “no,” then the prospect of rebuilding trust is dismal.

Major events that create broken trust in relationships, such as affairs, betrayals, excessive drinking or drug use, financial disasters, emotional or physical abusive behavior, are usually not the result of a single, unplanned event. They happen because there are larger issues in the relationship and within each person that need to be addressed and dealt with.

Until you are committed to looking at the thoughts and feelings that are underneath this major event that tore the two of you apart, there is usually no chance of a successful reconciliation because you will just repeat the behavior again.

So, take this time of introspection to truly decide whether you can commit to doing whatever is necessary to help yourself heal—whether that means going to drug or alcohol rehab or finding a psychotherapist or counselor who will help you resolve some of the hidden issues that are underneath your actions.

3. Create a written statement of your commitment.
If you have decided that you want to try to rebuild the trust that's been broken and are willing to do whatever is necessary, make a written commitment to yourself that this is your intention. Anything less than total honesty at this point will be of no value to anyone.
4. Commit to asking for forgiveness and making amends for your behavior.
Saying or thinking that you are "sorry" will probably fall well short of what is necessary to rebuilding trust in a relationship crisis situation. You have to ask for forgiveness and make amends, not based on what you think is appropriate, but on what the person you have wronged thinks and feels is appropriate.
5. How to make amends
The only way to make amends to another person for something you have done is to first find out what making amends means to the other

person. The only way to find out what making amends means to that other person is to ask them. In this situation, what you think is appropriate may not be enough or may not be what they think would be “right” from their point of view. For a detailed discussion of making amendments, see [Chapter 7](#).

6. Ask the other person to talk with you about this situation. If this is or has been an explosive situation or something that has gone on way too long with many broken promises, it may be a challenge to get the other person to listen to what you have to say. Expect that the other person may have a lot of anger towards you and may want to tell you about how badly they’ve been hurt. Try to listen and understand where the other person is coming from and admit what you have done.

After hearing the other person, this (or something like it) is what we suggest you say and do in order to take the first step in demonstrating your commitment to rebuilding trust and this relationship: (Do this only if you are sincere about it!)

Tell the person that you are totally committed to rebuilding trust and repairing the relationship and that you are willing to do whatever is necessary in order to do this. Ask them how you might begin doing this and then listen to what they have to say.

If the person will not talk with you, you can write a letter and tell them that you take responsibility for what you did and tell them how you are going to change. Then take steps to make those changes whether the person will talk with you or not. If you will begin to make positive changes in your life, you will find that all of your relationships will improve even if you may no longer be in this relationship.

7. Listen while the other person talks and don’t get defensive or interrupt. The person may need to rehash the situation and let you know “again” how much you have hurt them. Allow them to do this and don’t

interrupt. If they seem to be repeating themselves without telling you what you can do to make appropriate amends, we suggest that you acknowledge the pain you have caused and ask them directly what making appropriate amends would mean to them.

8. What to do before you commit to making the changes that are being asked of you.

Make sure that you have the desire and belief that you can actually follow-through to making the changes that are required before you commit to the other person.

Before you commit to making the changes that you are asked to make, consider if you are truly committed to doing it. If the other person's requirements seem overwhelming to you and you have doubts that you can do them, you may need some type of support system to learn the skills you need to help you keep these commitments that your partner is asking of you. These might include Alcoholics Anonymous, drug counseling, psychotherapy or help from a family member or friend.

You may need help in changing your behavior and that is why we are suggesting that you seek the help of a support person, counseling, or an organization.

Your partner may ask you to learn more effective ways to communicate. Be sure to read [Chapter 4](#) in this book. Taking a class or reading a book may also give you the support that you need to begin learning new skills to help you make the desired changes.

If you are asked to make changes that you don't want to make or can not make, be up front and honest about it.

9. Ask if your partner wants to rebuild the relationship. Ask him/her the following question (or something like it), "If I can demonstrate to your total satisfaction that I am willing to change, are you willing to commit to doing whatever is necessary as well?"

The answer this person gives in response to this question will tell you whether they have it in their heart to forgive you and whether they have the desire or not to rebuild the relationship.

10. Make your agreements and commitments in writing and post them where you will see them.

Several chapters in this book, including [Chapters 6 and 7](#), will give you great ideas for creating written agreements.

11. Keep your agreements and commitments.

There is no other way except to keep your agreements and commitments, one moment at a time. We suggest that you use Dr. Robert Huizenga's ideas in the next chapter on being predictable in your behavior. If you do, it will help your partner to see how far you've come in this process of trust rebuilding.

Be honest about it if you can't keep an agreement with the other person. Remember that one of the main problems in this relationship is a lack of trust so don't do anything more to destroy the trust that's being built between the two of you.

If the other person seems to only be interested in punishing you and not in moving forward toward trusting again even though you are keeping your agreements, you have a choice to make if you want to stay in the relationship or not.

If the trust cannot be rebuilt between the two of you and this relationship dissolves, don't give up on making the changes that you know that you need to make. You've probably learned a lot from this process so take this knowledge and apply it to all your relationships in your life, both now and in the future.

The following section is for the person who feels like they have been wronged:

Remember the choices given to you at the beginning of this chapter?

We'll repeat them here so that you can get a clear idea of where you stand.

1. To hold on to your fears, blame, judgment, being a victim, the need to be right for as long as you are in this relationship and even after it's over.
2. To make the decision to acknowledge your pain, heal yourself and decide that you cannot go forward in this relationship because the pain has been too great and you have no hope that the other person will act in good faith to rebuilt trust in this relationship.
3. To acknowledge the pain you have felt, look at your situation openly and honestly, and consciously decide, along with your partner, that your relationship is important enough to commit to doing whatever is necessary to healing it.

When a violation of trust has happened, it's healthy to acknowledge the pain that a person has caused you. It's not, however, healthy for you to stay stuck in that pain.

The challenge in rebuilding trust when there has been a major violation is that many people find themselves staying stuck in their positions as "victims." Staying stuck in the "victim" position and in "being right" can bring attention and validation, even though you may not recognize it at the time. Staying stuck does not allow movement toward rebuilding trust or in letting the relationship go. It keeps both of you in limbo.

Letting go of staying stuck is a conscious decision.

So, with that being said, your first challenge is to decide which of those choices you are going to take. If you choose to move forward, it doesn't have to mean that you want or will be able to be in a trusting relationship with this person. It only means that you are not going to stay stuck.

If you choose to move forward, here are some suggestions to help you to decide whether you are open or not to considering rebuilding your trust in this relationship:

1. **Calm down.** You are not going to be thinking clearly if you are in a rage, hyperventilating, feeling overwhelmed, yelling, or throwing things. Breathe deeply in your belly in order to begin placing yourself in a space where your thinking isn't clouded by intense emotion.

After you are fairly calm, take some time to get in touch with what you are honestly feeling about this person and this situation—not what you *should* feel but what you are actually feeling. If there's anger, hurt, fear, allow those feelings to be there and simply acknowledge them. Use the "[Power of Presence](#)" exercise in the Appendix to help you honestly assess if and how you might be able to move forward in this relationship.

Fear especially keeps us from moving forward and keeps us stuck. As Thaddeus Golas said in The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment, "We think fear is a signal to withdraw, when in fact it is a sign we are already withdrawing too much."

2. Look at your part in this relationship "dance" to discover how your thoughts and actions could have contributed to this situation. This doesn't mean placing blame on yourself for what has happened. It means honestly looking at your relationship and how there may have been things that you could have done differently, for example, speaking up to say what you wanted instead of withdrawing.
3. Get clear about what you want.

A vitally important question to ask yourself at this point is—“If my partner (the person you are in relationship with) is sorry for what they have done, is willing to make amends, willing to change their behavior, do I want to stay in this relationship with them and give it another chance?”

If you can honestly answer this question with a positive “yes” then rebuilding trust in this relationship is possible.

If you get a “no” when you ask yourself this question, then you’ll have a clear message that too much damage has been done in this relationship for you to open your heart once again to create a better relationship.

No matter which answer, being honest with the other person is your best course of action because it will either move you toward the healing process or move you into dissolving the relationship in the least painful way. Being honest also helps you to see the relationship for what it is and helps you and your partner to know what will truly be possible in this relationship.

Some people stay stuck in dead, lifeless relationships for many years because they aren’t willing to be honest with themselves and each other.

If you are honest with each other in this relationship, you will reduce the amount of time that you are stuck in pain.

If you said “yes” to this relationship and the possibility of starting again with this person, here are some suggestions to help you do that:

1. Before you speak to the other person about this situation, get clear about what it would mean for the other person to make amends. Read the information in this book on making [amends](#) to get some ideas about what that might mean in your situation.

2. Consider what it would mean to forgive this person and to move past this current situation. What steps are you willing to take to help you to begin the forgiveness process? Forgiveness may not be something that you are willing to do right now but realize that whatever the situation, sooner or later for your own health and well-being, it is something to work toward.
3. Have the courage to share with this person, openly and honestly. This may simply mean that you will agree to listen as this person tells you what they are willing to do differently in your relationship and then you share how you are feeling and what you'd like to have happen. Or it may mean making the first move to communicate with this person.

If you are making the first move, as soon as you are clear about your feelings about this situation, seek out this person and share with them that although you are hurt and in pain, you are willing to be open to the possibility that the relationship could be healed if certain things happen.

4. Tell the person what your boundaries are and what making amends means to you. Be clear with the other person about what has to happen in order for your heart to stay open and for you to begin trusting again. Make sure you read the next chapter in this book.
5. Share what you are willing to do to make the relationship different. Accept your role or responsibility in what has happened in the relationship and accept the possibility that there were things that each of you could have done differently. Take responsibility for your own empowerment by accepting your role and actively choosing some positive ways to move toward the relationship that you want.

How do you want to be differently in this relationship? Are there some new skills you want to learn either by yourself or with your partner to help make the relationship better? You may want to consider counseling or coaching, either by yourself or with your

- partner, to help you to create the kind of relationship that you both are wanting.
6. Make written agreements that you both can live with and keep. See [Chapters 6 and 7](#) for good ideas about creating agreements that last.
 7. Keep your agreements and be willing to let go of the past and start fresh in this relationship. Stay in the present moment. When you find yourself slipping into negative thinking about your relationship, remind yourself that this is a new day.

Chapter 14

10 Crucial Steps to Build Trust

By Dr. Robert Huizenga, LMFT, CSW

1. Be predictable

When do seeds of suspicion emerge? When one begins to think, “What’s up? Why is he doing that? He’s never done that before? That is so unlike him? He loses 30 pounds, buys a new wardrobe and comes home late from work. He changes his patterns. His behavior becomes unpredictable. You get the picture? Any movement away from predictable behavior can become suspect and trust can deteriorate.

Focus on acting predictably if you need to build trust. Be consistent in what you do.

This doesn’t mean you must be boring. If there is a twinkle in your eye and a dose of spontaneity every so often, for goodness sakes be spontaneous and fun loving. But, be spontaneous consistently! Be true to who you have always been and be that consistently, whoever you tend to be!

2. Inform your significant other when you become “unpredictable.”

No one goes through life the same person. We all make shifts and changes. Frankly sometimes we may be fairly clueless about what is happening and where we are going. Those times may be very intense and we do some silly things or make some downright dumb decisions. Life can get very squirrely and unpredictable. (I have a favorite phrase: Gold is refined through intense heat.) Growth in an individual, marriage or family often is accompanied by a little chaos.

Welcome these shifts, for there is a part of you searching for something better/different/richer/deeper, but for heaven's sake, inform your partner of what you are experiencing. Say, "I really don't know what is going on in me right now, but I'm moving in a different direction. Be a little patient with me while I figure this out. I might do some silly things, but my intent is not to harm you or scare you. Accept some of my wondering and wandering and please be there for me? I may need to run some of this by you every so often!"

3. Make sure your words match the message.

Mean what you say and say what you mean. When your partner hears one thing in your words but your tone of voice, body language and facial expressions are really saying something else, you open the relationship to some crazy making days. Which message is she to believe? This can waste a tremendous amount of energy and she learns not to trust part of what you are saying.

Here's a very simple but common example. You are getting ready to go to a formal dinner. Your wife comes to you and says, "How do I look?" (And she's wearing a dress you don't particularly like and her hair is pulled back in a way that turns you off.)

Not to spoil the evening you enthusiastically say, "You look great." You don't really mean it and a part of her knows you really don't mean it. But, you leave it at that.

This might not seem like a big deal – we all have done something similar – but if trust is shaky to begin with, it is even shakier now.

Here's how to match the words with the nonverbal: "I think you are a beautiful person. I want you to know that. I love you dearly and it will be wonderful to have you by my side tonight. Others will see your beauty. (As you say this, you look into her eyes as you put your hands around her waist.)

She's not concerned so much with how she looks but is expressing a need for affirmation. She's not talking about her dress or hair, but about wanting to know the evening is going to go just fine. You respond to the real message.

You can take this one step further, if you like. At some point you might bring up her need for affirmation and talk about that. Ask her if there is anything you can say or do so that her need is met.

Trust is awareness of the intent beneath the obvious message and responding to that!

4. Believe the other person is competent.

I hear this phrase very often: "But, I don't want to hurt him." A couple things are at play here. First, she may not have the skill of confronting the other with the truth in a way that brings reconciliation and understanding. She believes truth telling is destructive or entails some sort of drama. Neither is true. The truth is never destructive and can be conveyed in loving ways. (With that being said, what we believe to be the truth may indeed be a distorted perception that fits our personal needs.)

Or, she may see the other person as a wimp; someone she believes cannot handle rigorous personal confrontation. She doesn't trust that the other person has the internal strength or stamina or skills to be in a relationship of mutual respect and equality. The other person picks up on this mistrust and does what he does (feigns inadequacy and incompetence) to avoid the personal confrontation as well. A dance is acted out.

Believe and know in your heart that the other person, somewhere and somehow, beneath the games, has the internal strength and capacity to handle anything. Such trust builds trust in the other person and begins to pervade the relationship. "Hey, she thinks I can handle this! Hmmmm, this is mighty good! I CAN engage her and be truly intimate!"

5. Be very very careful of keeping secrets.

If he knows there is an elephant in the room and doesn't talk about it, the elephant takes up tremendous space in the relationship. It takes energy for him to walk around it. She may not see the elephant but knows he is bending his neck to look around something. She will be curious, mildly disturbed, have feelings but no words to wrap around them, might wonder if something is wrong with her or struggle with trusting her intuition (her intuition KNOWS an elephant is there.) And, when we can't trust the messages that come from within us, we find it very difficult to trust the messages of the other person.

Secrets demand tremendous energy and erode trust. The relationship is doomed never to experience wall-banging intimacy. This is why extramarital affairs are so damaging. She is not so much concerned about him having sex with someone else as she is about the betrayal, lack of trust, the secrets and deception that are crazy making and energy draining.

Now, please. I'm not saying that you sit your partner down and divulge the 23 secrets of your illicit past behaviors. If you have resolved those, i.e. forgiven yourself, understand those behaviors, learned from them and were able to use them to make the internal shifts necessary for your personal development, they do not qualify as an elephant. Hopefully, in the course of growing intimacy in your relationship you may want to share some of those events as you disclose to your partner where you were and where you are now. You do so without emotional charge.

However, if a secret takes up room, i.e. still has an emotional charge and holds you back from disclosing more and more of yourself in the growing stages of intimacy, you have a problem that needs to be addressed with your partner.

6. Let YOUR needs be known - loudly.

Be a little - no, be a lot - self-centered. (Be self-centered, but not selfish!)

Here's a problem I run into almost every day. He is backing away (perhaps attached to work, another person, etc.). She feels the trust and intimacy eroding, is scared and wants to "win him back." So she begins an all out effort to "work on the marriage." She invites him to do so as well. He may reluctantly agree. She blasts full throttle ahead trying to "be nice" and meet every need he ever said he had. She's going to "fill his tank with goodies."

Doesn't work. Her eyes are riveted on him. He feels "smothered" or maybe even resentful: "Why is she doing this NOW!" She's hopeful, but eventually that turns to resentment. Her underlying motive – if I meet his needs, he will feel good and meet mine – just doesn't work. It's perceived as manipulation, which it is. Of course, he doesn't say anything. After all, how do you get angry with someone who is so "nice and caring?"

Trust disintegrates under a blanket of quiet niceties.

Start with your eyes focused on YOU. What do YOU need? Explore your personal need system. Dig beneath the surface. And then say to him: "I need...x, y and z. I would like to talk to you about them. I would like us to work out a way so my needs are met. Are you open to that?"

He is empowered to say yes or no. Or, he may say, "What about my needs?" You respond, "I am very interested in hearing what is important to you, certainly."

Have you ever been around someone who stated clearly what they needed/wanted?

Didn't you respect that person?

Because you knew where he stood, and therefore where you stood, didn't that interaction move toward a trusting relationship?

7. State who YOU are – loudly

It is very sad to see those in relationships of emotional investment hold back from letting the other person know who they really are.

You build trust in a relationship by entrusting your SELF to the other person.

This sounds easy but I find it difficult for most to pull off. Most of us have a difficult time declaring our SELF. For one thing, if you're like most of us, you haven't given much thought to what it is that makes YOU truly YOU. Don't you feel like you glide through life on autopilot, focusing on tasks, goals, accomplishments, problems and the external realities?

Don't you tend to focus on those things out there or that person out there? You're concerned about what he is thinking, how he is responding to you, whether he likes you, whether he will be an obstacle and where he will fit in your life?

Your conversations may be pleasant but fairly superficial and bluntly, boringly inane. You converse about thing/relationships/events out there. You are reluctant to share your thoughts, values, and impressions or take a stand. This doesn't destroy trust. But it doesn't create it either.

And, if you do take a stand it may serve the purpose of protecting you or entrenching you as you react against someone. This more often than not creates trust barriers.

Take some time to reflect on your standards. What are your standards for a relationship? What standards do you hold for yourself? What do you order your life around? What are the 4 top values in your life? What are some themes that you live by? What are you known for?

And then...begin letting significant people in your life know.

They will respect you. They will know you more deeply. They will thank you for the opportunity to know you. They will see you as a person of character.

They will trust you. They can count on you. They know exactly what is behind and within you.

8. Learn to say NO!

Sometimes you need to say NO! Often it is crucial to say NO!

Saying NO sets boundaries around you that protects you from being hurt or venturing into territory that will be destructive to your heart and soul. You draw a line. You stop tolerating that which drains energy and makes you less than YOU. You refuse to allow the destructive behaviors of others to destroy you. You build a moat around the core of your life.

You do this by informing the other person of what they are doing. You request they stop. If they don't stop, you demand they stop. If they don't stop you walk away without a snide remark, eye-roll or comment.

To some this seems harsh, but saying NO is RESPECTED.

Fear is the basis of mistrust. If you fear that someone will hurt you and believe you have no recourse but to endure that hurt, fear will prevail. How can you trust when you are in fear?

Saying NO, protecting yourself, sends a message to the other person that you will not live in fear. This usually triggers a response of respect from the other person. After all, if you can protect yourself and refuse subjugation to that which is destructive, will not the other person come to trust you and see you as a person who just might protect him/her from harm as well?

9. Charge Neutral

When your significant other expresses something powerfully, charge neutral.

Most of us are afraid of strong feelings or points of contention in a relationship. I commonly hear people respond by defending themselves (to a perceived attack), explaining themselves, counter-attacking, shutting down,

or walking away. Of course, the relationship remains stuck in this quagmire of mistrust and fear.

Rather than reacting and having your feelings flowing all over the place or shutting down, practice charging neutral.

Communicate calmness, not only in your tone of voice but also in how you carry your body. Don't speak with a charge to your voice. Control your voice! Say what you must say, state the truth and do it directly and calmly.

You can do this, once you master your fears. It will dramatically change the flow of the relationship.

You will be able to point out something big, without making a big deal out of it. You will be in control of you. This not only feels great, but your partner trusts that you won't fly or fall apart.

You will experience your personal power. This makes you very attractive. Don't people really trust someone who knows their personal power and how to use it for the welfare of themselves and others?

Your partner will love the fact that she can trust you consistently to operate from your "quiet center," remain engaged, not back down and speak the truth with conviction and calmness.

10. Dig into the dirt.

Relationships of emotional investment, by their nature, bring trials, tribulations, fears, chaos, turmoil, change, stretching and growth. They become the grist from which your life is shaped and formed.

Be fearless when faced with turmoil, upset, crisis, questions, and fears. When the time is right, seek them out. Move toward the frightening unknown. Dig into the dirt of your relationship and uncover the treasures. Do you really TRUST that this can happen?

The purpose of your relationship is not to make you happy. Do you realize this? Happiness may be an outcome, but your other is given to you to move you to where you really want to be.

Obstacles, trials and moments of pain are given as lessons on which you intentionally write the script of your life individually and together. Embrace the difficult. Trust that in this embracing you will find more of your true self.

Trust that you are given the resources and capacity to face what you and your significant other are to face.

Once you are able to believe and trust these ultimate purposes, trusting your significant other will be that much easier.

About the author:

Dr. Robert Huizenga is a respected Marriage and Family Therapist with over two decades of clinical experience, study and research. He is an expert on infidelity and extramarital affairs and author of "[Break Free From the Affair](#)" – a groundbreaking and best selling e-book offering hard-hitting strategies for 7 kinds of affairs. He offers personal coaching and resources for those facing infidelity that result in marriage problems and possible divorce. Visit his website: <http://www.break-free-from-the-affair.com>

Appendix

The “Power of Presence” Exercise

We suggest that you do this exercise whenever you feel any strong emotion coming up for you that throws you into reactive, destructive patterns. This exercise will help you to get some clarity about your emotion and help you to sort out what’s happening now, versus what has happened in the past. It will also help you to allow the emotion to flow through you and calm you so that you can speak clearly about the situation and what you are feeling.

We’ve found that it’s a great way to begin to learn to trust yourself and to learn to ask what you want in a clear, positive way.

It’s a good idea to practice doing this a few times before a strong emotion comes up for you. When you do find yourself getting angry, fearful, feeling alone or sad and you are with someone, you may want to tell the other person that you need some time by yourself. Find a quiet place to do this exercise, stay with it until you have gained some clarification, feel calmer and can talk about the situation. Then rejoin the other person and explain what you are feeling if that seems appropriate.

Here’s the exercise...

Find a comfortable place to sit, with your back straight and feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Take some breaths and bring that breath into your belly. Slow down and deepen your breathing. As you take a breath in, your belly rises like an inflated balloon and as you exhale, your belly pulls back into your spine. When you find thoughts coming into your mind (and they will), simply pull yourself back to focusing on your breathing.

1. The first step is to come into awareness of what's inside you. Notice the chatter in your mind. Don't dwell on your thoughts. Just notice them, pause, breathe and let them go.
2. The second step is to observe what you are feeling about this situation and where in your body you are feeling some sensation. It might be a pain, a queasy feeling, an ache or feeling of unease. Is the sensation in your belly area? In your head? In your back?

For example, if there's discomfort or pain in your head, look to see if you are feeling angry or if you are holding back anger in any way. If you're feeling discomfort, pain or even a tickle in your chest or throat, it usually correlates with sadness in some way. Feelings of discomfort or pain in your stomach area usually mean that there is fear around something.

Breathe into that area.

Now put an emotion to what you are feeling. Are you sad, mad, glad, alone, or afraid? Make sure that you just stick with those 5 emotions because other emotions are usually built on these 5. Identifying one of these emotions will help you clearly express to the other person what you are feeling.

3. The third step is to allow whatever feeling is there to be there. Embrace the feeling and don't try to make it wrong, change it or work on it. Just breathe into that feeling and area of your body and just allow the feelings to be there.
4. The fourth step is acceptance. Bring an attitude of compassion and acceptance to whatever feeling that is coming up. This might not be an acceptable feeling for you but those feelings are there and by accepting them, you are contacting what's inside you.

5. The fifth step is to feel an active presence—to find guidance in your heart by quieting your mind so that you are able to speak and act from centered place.
6. Continue to do this until the feeling has no more power over you in this moment.

When you are able to do that, a great deal of stress and anxiety can be released by “breathing” into that area of your body and accepting that emotion for what it is—no more, no less.

This is an exercise you can do to be with those feelings without trying to make them wrong, accepting and embracing them without judging yourself.

When you do this exercise, it is much easier to put words to what you are feeling in a way that others can hear them. It’s also easier to allow these feelings to pass through your body and not overwhelm you.

If you need help with this exercise, we would be happy to coach you through the process.

About Susie and Otto

Susie and Otto Collins are married relationship and life success coaches from South Central Ohio who spend their time sharing with others how to create more conscious, connected and loving relationships and lives.

Together, they are the authors of books, tapes and over 200 published articles on relationships. Their book titles include "Should You Stay or Should You Go?" "Stop Talking on Eggshells" "Magic Relationship Words" and "No More Jealousy."

For 30 years, Susie has been a student of relationships, spirituality, energy and the life force. Her search for physical, emotional and spiritual healing has led her to the study of Polarity Therapy, cranio-sacral therapy, reflexology, Hatha Yoga, the Enneagram, and much more. Her formal training includes a Bachelor of Science degree in education, a Masters degree in Library Science, and is a Registered Polarity Therapy Practitioner with the American Polarity Therapy Association. Susie is a veteran teacher and university librarian with over 30 years experience teaching in the public schools and university classes. On the university level, she's taught courses in Education, Communications and currently teaches a Women's Studies course.

Otto has spent over 20 years as a successful salesperson and marketer of a variety of products and services. Many years ago, as a result of pondering three of life's greatest questions-- Who am I, Why am I here and What's this all about-- Otto turned his life's focus to bear on the practice and study of spirituality, personal growth and relationships.

They passionately believe that life can be lived in a joyful, conscious, loving way and are committed to helping others to experience the potential of what is possible in their own lives and relationships. The desire to be loved the way they wanted to be loved took each of them on a journey of discovery of how to create the relationship of their dreams. They believe Spirit put them together for their own personal growth and to shine the light of hope for

others. Their goal is to help others create outstanding lives and passionate, alive, connected relationships.

For well over 20 years, both Susie and Otto have immersed themselves in the study of personal and spiritual growth. Their primary focus has been the study of creating outstanding relationships of all kinds.

Susie and Otto's formal coaching and relationships training has been from The Hendricks Institute and Drs. Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks, who are authors of "Conscious Living" and "Conscious Loving." For many years, Susie and Otto have been students of what makes relationships work and they continue to share what they have learned through their books, tapes, web sites, workshops, seminars and daily lives.

They write a free weekly online, content-rich newsletter that offers proven, practical tips and ideas for solving relationship problems and challenges that reaches almost 40,000 people in over 47 countries. They speak from their own experience and what they have learned from their relationship coaching practice clients, teaching people how to create relationships that last and ones that are filled with joy, passion, connection and love.

Contact Info

For more info about working with Susie or Otto personally to improve your relationships and have them be your Relationship or Life Coaches visit <https://susieandotto.com/coaching/>

Susie and Otto's other relationship products:

Learn the words that help you say it right and be heard every time
<http://www.MagicRelationshipWords.com>

Don't leave any relationship before you read Susie and Otto's Book "Should You Stay or Should You Go?" Read more about this book at
<https://susieandotto.com/stay-or-go/>

Is jealousy a problem in your relationship? "No More Jealousy" will help you eliminate from your life. Visit <http://www.nomorejealousy.com>

For more information about their work visit their web site at:

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