

Ten Guidelines for Establishing Healthy Trust

“How do I know if someone is trustworthy?”

“How can I become trustworthy?”

“How can I ever trust again?”

Healthy trust is hard work. Betrayal, neglect, abuse, addiction and abandonment damage healthy trust but it's never too late to learn how to create healthy trust. Healthy trust means trusting yourself to do what is *right*, even when it's not easy.

- **Trusting "too much" means giving your power away.** *Too much* trust results in feelings of guilt, shame, resentment, regret, remorse, self-doubt and victimization.
- **Trusting “too little” means you withhold trust without cause.** *Too little* trust results in feelings of separation, isolation, loneliness, hopelessness, depression, suspicion, aggression or paranoia.
- **Healthy trust means that you trust YOURSELF.** (Intimacy = into me see) **You trust yourself to make decisions based on your values, not based on your emotions.**

Listen to your inner voice of wisdom.

Own your choices.

Validate yourself.

Express yourself

Use these 10 healthy trust guidelines in all of your relationships:

- 1.) **Listen to yourself even when it is easier not to.** Trust yourself to live by your values. People feel violated or violate others because they failed to listen to their own better judgment.
- 2.) **Build friendships, relationships, intimacy and love gradually over time.** Immediate, intense, impulsive connections represent immaturity, dependency and a fear of being alone. Although this fast pace is romantic and makes great *Lifetime movies*, in *real life* “Easy In” is often followed by “Easy Out.”
- 3.) **Listen to how others speak of their friends and family.** *Be loyal to those who are not present. (**Loyalty to those not present is a Stephen Covey term referring to speaking about people in the same manner when they are absent as you would when they are present*).
- 4.) **Behavior speaks louder than words.** Observe behavior. Alignment of words and actions creates healthy trust. Trust is damaged when words and actions conflict.

“I’m not upset that you lied to me, I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe you.”

*Friedrich Nietzsche

*Derivation of a quote from *Beyond Good and Evil*. “Not that you lied to me but that I no longer believe you has shaken me.”

- 5) **Honor personal privacy.** Respect your own privacy as well as the privacy of others. Keep some feelings and information private. Never share information you cannot afford to disclose.
- 6) **Set limits, enforce limits and honor others' limits.** Trust requires that "no" means "no." Say "no" without feeling guilty. Respect another's right to tell you "no."
- 7) **Teach people how to treat you.** Do not tolerate or reward another's inappropriate behavior. Take responsibility for negotiating your needs in every relationship. Notice when your anger creates difficulty with people relating openly with you.
- 8) **Be honorable.** Honor your word. Be trustworthy. Maintain your dignity.
- 9) **You will repeat your childhood trust issues until you heal them.** Learn from past lessons to make healthier choices today. Children who feel betrayed by angry, abusive, immature, neglectful or addicted parents learn to choose angry, abusive, immature, neglectful or addicted people to betray trust in adulthood. Relationships are a reflection of how you view your role in the world. Heal what you prefer not to repeat. "Be the change you seek," Gandhi.
- 10.) **Information is power: Understand issues related to child development, addiction and cognitive or mood impairment.**
 - Become familiar with the stages of childhood cognitive development. Children demonstrate trust-worthiness in developmental stages. A two-year old cannot "be trusted" to stay out of the street. A child with attention deficit disorder cannot "be trusted" to complete multiple tasks without supervision. Learn how to determine age appropriate "trust" by taking a parenting class or reading a developmental child psychology book.
 - Understand that addictive, mood-altering substances interfere with trust-worthiness. Do not expect an addicted person to be trustworthy. Addiction loosens inhibitions, impairs judgment and causes brain damage. Attend Alanon to learn more about maintaining relationships with people who struggle with addictions.
 - Mental illness, cognitive impairment and dementia may also interfere with trust-worthiness. People who suffer from brain diseases, head injury, chemical imbalances, dementia and other neurological disorders often demonstrate difficulties with impulse control, judgment, reasoning, concentration, memory and decision-making. A psychological or neurological evaluation will help establish a plan to address these deficits.