

Restoring Trust in 6 Steps

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There is no secret to restoring trust. Transparent integrity, authentic intention, and appropriate self-trust skill are all required. The process of restoring trust doesn't just happen. It takes significant inner work on the part of all involved. Before you can even begin again to trust others you first need to trust yourself. And of course everyone involved in the trust relationship must first establish high self-trust as well. Let's start with you.

Restoring trust involves 6 steps in two cycles (although you may need to cycle through 6 steps many times if needed). You ought to go through the first cycle alone to prepare yourself by ensuring the requisite levels of self-trust. Solidify your self-trust. If you are not part of the solution, likely you are part of the problem. It is recommended to go through the first cycle just to be sure you are ready. However, if you do not go through the first cycle, then I would highly recommend that a facilitator be a part of the second cycle. The first cycle prepares you to lead and facilitate. It provides the authority to move forward in a responsible manner. If you do not have the necessary self-trust, you will not be seen as sufficiently trustworthy; thus you will be viewed as part of the problem.

First Cycle

1. Envision / imagine what it would be like to have high self-trust. See yourself with glowing confidence, assuredness beyond reproach, accurate self-image, and high self-esteem. Create a proleptic future – an image that draws you towards it with consuming power.
2. Come clean. Holding your vision of high self-trust in mind, how do you measure up? Acknowledge who you are and how you are feeling – angry, frustrated, betrayed, lost. Regardless of how you feel right now, this is the starting point – be honest with yourself. Honor your emotions. Accept your dark, unsavory, and primitive elements. Know your vulnerabilities. Let go of your anger if any exists. Forgive yourself. Regardless of where you are right now give yourself grace. We've all been there.
3. Gap analysis: accept where you are now, and where you want to be in your trust relationship with yourself. Set realistic standards of excellence, then establish markers so that you can acknowledge your progress. You may need to adjust your expectations. Find necessary resources to assist you if you cannot do this alone. Create an action plan to meet your vision of high self-trust for yourself.
4. Commit to your plan. Commit to keeping your commitments going forward.
5. Work your plan. As you are reflecting and learning to increase your self-trust, leave past self-betrayals behind. Remain patient, take time to reflect. This is you working on you. As you move toward your ideal image you become clearer about who you are, and you accept the movement towards self-trust.
6. Acknowledge, evaluate, and celebrate successes. Rejoice that you are now ready, healthier, eager to take on the challenges of restoring trust with others. You now exude high integrity, you are open with your intentions and appreciate benevolence. You now

have the capabilities – the necessary skills – to leverage your self-trust as you engage others. You now are in a position of strength. Celebrate where you are now.

As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live. ~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Second cycle

The second cycle is similar to the First Cycle, however it includes the other(s) with which you would like to restore trust. If I use the same exact words in the Second Cycle from the First Cycle it is because they are very important and really should not be lost.

1. Call a “We Agree” session with all those involved. At this session, start by listing the desirable elements of a trusting relationship. Using the points upon which you agree, envision / imagine what it would be like to be in this relationship. See yourself with the other(s) interacting efficaciously. Imagine supporting each other as levels of transparency increase, decisions coming more quickly, and reduction of extended debate and deliberation. Create a proleptic future – an image that draws you towards it with consuming power.
2. Come clean and expect emotional reaction. Apologize to yourself and to the others. Express your feelings. Forgive yourself - Let go of your anger, express your feelings of frustration, betrayal and/or loss. Let the other(s) vent and express their feelings. Give and accept acceptance – Grace. Recognize that all humans are comprised of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parts. In other words, we are all flawed beings. Change what you can, and accept that which will never be fully evolved. At this point do not try to resolve these issues. Hear them. Acknowledge them. Resolution comes later. This is the starting point for those involved. This is disclosure.

When trust is broken, those involved experience many emotions. The feeling of loss is often the most poignant - the loss of what was or what could have been. Acknowledge how you and others are responding to that loss. Own the experience, listen to what's important, and demonstrate that everyone's view matters.

Be sure to interact face-to-face. You may also include tangible tools such as surveys and assessments to measure trust and identify how to move forward.

Is this uncomfortable and hard? You bet. Who wants to face their vulnerabilities, mistakes, and possible ugly side? However, this is a critical step in experiencing healthy, thriving self-trust, and a necessary element is creating any trust relationship.

3. Gap analysis and planning. What does it take to move us from where we are to our desired trusting relationship? Honestly assess the situation. This may include the reality that some involved do not have sufficient self-trust. If that is the case it must be addressed now. That may be the first step of the action plan. Ensure that everyone is trustworthy. If integrity is the issue, address it. If intent is the issue, address it. If capability is the issue, address it.

Continue with the planning. With everyone trustworthy, now focus on working together. How much risk can be placed in our actions? How much collaboration is necessary? What is our expectation for the results? We may need to adjust expectations. We may need to make our life / agendas more open.

As you work together, get and give support. Reframe the experience. Take responsibility.

4. Commit to the plan. Commit to yourself, commit to the others. Make and keep commitments going forward. Making a commitment is the easy part. Keeping the commitment is more difficult and much more important in a trust relationship.
5. Collaborate as you work the plan and keep your commitments. Acknowledge the strong, intense emotions like distress, hostility, rejection, intimacy, acceptance and love. You are working on restoring trust. Be conscious of projecting feelings externally because you don't want to deal with them. At this point you may trust yourself which requires that you accept your feelings. Deal with your emotions, ask the other(s) to help you with your feelings.

Leave your past betrayals behind. You are restoring trust because your prior relationship was trusting. Resist the urge to dwell on the wrongs that may have been committed and refuse to let these experiences get in the way of fostering healthy relationships now.

Understand the time and patience it takes to restore trust. Trust means suspending instant gratification. While waiting for something to happen, or happen faster, find healthy ways to move forward. Discuss your progress with the other(s). Recall the image of a healthy trusting relationship that is drawing you in. Reflect and review how much closer you are to where you want to be. Know that the world is basically a safe place, ready to trust you. Consider the inherent goodwill of others.

Learn to accept that when someone has betrayed or compromised your trust, you are able to withstand uncomfortable feelings of rage, rejection, hurt, uncertainty, and loss. You will not fall apart now and self-destruct because you haven't done so thus far. Success awaits.

6. Acknowledge, evaluate, and celebrate successes as you move forward. This is a formative evaluation; that is you may come to this step often and when you do, immediately review if it changes your initial image of a trusting relationship. If it does, Step 2 will help you address how you feel about the change. Step 3 will need to be adjusted to include the change in vision and the change in your feelings. Continue with the cycle(s)...

Summary Comments

Realize others cannot 'get it' you if you don't 'get it' yourself. Trust yourself first.

Engage in the 'difficult conversation' with yourself, and then with others.

Take personal accountability for restoring trust: self-trust first, which creates trustworthiness, then work on trusting others.

Seek to see the other person in a new light - trying to do their best.

Accept that the view of the situation can include multiple truths - yours and others.

Trust plays an important role in every relationship: personal and professional. The six steps are highly effective with personal - very close private relationships, as well as with all work relationships.