

I TRUST

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Reflection and Discussion Guide

Learning – What We Heard

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Introduction

Trust is all about you.

You are the most important and central part of TRUST. You are complex and multifaceted. Trust is complex, and multifaceted as well. Yet, we all can obtain a better understanding of our self and of trust. *“When you trust your-self, you have the portal to trust someone else.”* – Julia...

You have to do it all by yourself; and you cannot do it alone. Therein lies the paradox; both elements are true. Let’s talk about you; me, and us.

We use quotes from interviews as primary grist for our reflections and discussion starters. The interviewees are identified by first name only. Enjoy the variety of voices throughout. Be sure to add your own voice often; in private, or share with others. You are critical in this endeavor.

How do you feel about trust?

What do you think about trust?

Please keep these two questions foremost in your mind as you continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- We encourage you to take notes and write down your own answers.
- Take advantage of opportunities to reflect on your own experiences.
- Uncover and discover your own strategies to rebuild trust – first with yourself and then with others.

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How do you define Trust? Or, What is Trust?

As we were writing I TRUST (the book) we struggled to define trust and determine what trust is. As we asked others this question, we realized how stimulating, and at the same time how frightening this question can be.

Some people were immediately engaged, others struggled for words, yet others were intimidated, hesitant, and even unwilling to respond.

Originally, it was Geo's idea to interview people asking three questions:

- 1. What is trust?**
- 2. How do we break trust?**
- 3. How do we rebuild/restore trust?**

We thought this was a brilliant idea and encouraged him to continue. He did, and we share what he found throughout I TRUST.

In the meantime, Rich thought he could gather a little data as well. So, he jumped on LinkedIn and invited people to connect with him.

When a connection was made, the first question he asked was: How do you define trust? He thought that for a LinkedIn connection, this was the best framing of the question. He asked the question cold, without context, just the question.

Rich was stunned by the very first two responses which came in within minutes of each other.

Would your answer be the same to each question?

Both are encouraging a thoughtful response.

Both focus on trust.

Which would you be most comfortable asking and/or answering?

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The first: **“Trust is simple. It's both believing, and believing in someone, without any doubt in every interaction.”**

The second: **“This is a loaded question. I don't really know you or the context to answer a question like that.”**

Rich felt (thought) the first response was sincere, authentic, and accepting – trusting. “I could feel the benevolent openness. The second which may have been sincere, was removed, hesitant, more closed – much less trusting. I took a step back, at least emotionally.” Interesting.

The first was a response from a woman. A male answered second. We are not suggesting that gender makes a difference, just reporting the responses.

More importantly, **with whom would you rather have a conversation?**

There are many opportunities to engage the first person. Is trust really simple? Do you need to believe in yourself first, then the other? Is trust really all inclusive – in every interaction? The openness invited an extended conversation.

“I could feel her resonance drawing me in.”

The second, in effect, told Rich, ‘I don’t trust you enough to talk about trust’.

“Where would I start a conversation with this person? I felt uncomfortable, hesitant, I wanted to step back and to remove myself from this interaction.”

Just what are the variables that contribute to someone to be more trusting and other less so?

Following are the responses from the first eight days on LinkedIn. As you read them, be sensitive to how each response makes you feel.

It may be helpful to make a little mark after each response: + for a positive feeling; - for a negative feeling; and 0 for no feeling at all:

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Day 1 First responses

- *“Trust is simple. It's both believing and believing in someone without any doubt in every interaction.”* ____
- *“This is a loaded question. I don't really know you or the context to answer a question like that.”* ____
- *“It is built over a period of time.”* ____

Day 2 responses

- *“Interesting question. The belief that someone or something will act in your best interest. Even if you perceive that action to be harmful to yourself.”* ____
- *“I'm not sure. Not sure what you are asking.”* ____
- *“Trust can be defined in many ways largely depending on the context. Throughout my career trust has been given to me by clients through one quality. That is Sincerity. I genuinely care about the person not the products or money behind them. People know when you are motive driven. Without further elaboration what does trust mean to you?”* ____
- *“Trust to me, as a co-worker or employee, is when I know another person has the skills to accomplish said task. Meaning you can hand something off without thinking twice.”* ____
- *“Remaining humble is knowing you produce quality work, without bragging about it or comparing it to others work.”* ____

Day 3

- *“Like everyone else the belief that information is accurate and tasks will be completed without personal verification.”* ____

Day 4

- *“That seems like a peculiar, open-ended question, and one where I don't have any particular expertise. Sorry I can't be of more assistance.”* ____
- *“Trust is a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something”* ____

Day 5

- *“Good question”* ____

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Day 6

- *“I define trust as a feeling of security or comfort with someone.”* ____
- *“I define it as a feeling, a feeling of peace of mind knowing a situation that is effecting you ever if that situation is out of your control or in the control of other individuals of powers will have a successful outcome.”* ____
- *“Many ways. Where are you going?”* ____
- *“Believing, based on past experience with someone that they will do the right thing.”* ____

Day 7

- *“Sorry, I won't be responding to that. Thanks. Have a fine day.”* ____
- *“Good question. But why do you ask?”* ____
- *“Good question. I guess: one party believing in what another party says and does. The other party could be doing something wrong, but the first party still has faith in her/him.”* ____

Day 8

- *“I don't. It's too complicated.”* ____

How did these responses make you feel?

“I clearly experienced a range of feelings as I was reading the responses. Just imagine, if responses to a simple question about trust can evoke a range of emotions, how must trust feel when you are a fuller part of the relationship.”

Rich

Trust is complex. It evokes emotion and requires clear thought.

Remember - it is all about you.

You are the most important part of trust.

Journal or meditate about how you are feeling. Take 5 – 10 minutes for the next few days until can you clearly express that feeling.

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The responses reveal a range of trust levels. Some reveal high levels of trust, some even posed another question to continue the conversation. Others ended the conversation quickly.

Each response revealed a level of trust, or lack thereof.

Each response added to the rich and subjective understanding of trust. We will weave all of these insights into I TRUST.

Too many people do not put a lot of thought into trust: “*I don’t [define trust]. It’s too complicated*”. Yes, it is complicated. It is also important.

Yet, many of us do not reflect on how to create trusting relationships or psychologically safe environments.

What can we do to encourage a more serious approach to trust?

Your thoughts? (Take a few minutes to reflect and/or write your answers)

Please go back and tally the number of + positive feelings evoked; do the same for the – negative feelings; and or the 0’s for no feeling at all.

Did you record more positive feelings?

If so, does that make you feel you have high self-trust? And do you have a tendency to see others as trustworthy? How does this make you feel?

Did you record more negative feelings?

If so, does this bring some reflection about your self-trust? Do you generally see others as trustworthy? How does this make you feel?

Did you have several 0’s?

Are you ambivalent about trust? Do you feel that ambivalence is a good position? Why?

Trust evokes emotion and requires thinking.

Think about it.

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A Deeper Dive

Geo took a deeper dive into understanding trust. The interviewees included the homeless, young sojourners, entrepreneurs, business people, and clergy.

Trust is relational and context plays a large role. When asking people these three questions, the responses are best understood and appreciated in context. Each respondent holds a particular mindset and responds from that perspective.

Consider the main concepts of trust and profound quotes that will be shared.

The main concepts include: Self-trust, self-alignment, faith in self, focus on self, mind-set. Also included are: authenticity, responsibility, Integrity, intent, capabilities, behaviors, actions, and results.

When we deal with others, more complex and intimate concepts are also noted; love, unconditional love, betrayal, forgiveness, vision, expectations, confidence, relationships, spirituality, fear, feeling safe and supported, earned and given, choice, giving of yourself.

Yes, that and more.

He conducted a range of interviews asking three questions:

- 1. What is trust?**
- 2. How do we break trust?**
- 3. How do we rebuild / restore trust?**

Write out how you currently define these words. This will provide a clear foundation for you.

When you have read through the material come back and review.

Have your definitions strengthened or changed?

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Sharing some of the quotes will also stimulate your thoughts and feelings about trust.

These include keen insight:

“When you trust your-self, you have the portal to trust someone else.”

“That moment we stop trusting is the moment we stop truly living.”

The relational aspect of trust:

“I would say to someone that I trust them, it is like, it is synonymous, parallel to saying, I love you. If I say I trust you, that is very intimate, that is a spiritual thing for me.”

The range from being highly concrete to highly abstract:

“Trust is being able to cross the street and knowing that you may or may not be hurt, but you cross anyway.”

“It is a matter of the heart.”

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The primary learning from the interviews can be summarized as follows:

TOP 10 INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

1. Trust is Complex
2. Trust Starts with Self
3. Trust is Mindset First then Behavior
4. Trust is Personal and Intimate
5. Trust is Earned and Given
6. Trust is Omnipresent
7. Trust involves Communication
8. Trust is Expressed Authenticity
9. Trust Confronts Fear
10. Trust Involves Choice: Unresolved; Restored; Redeemed

Trust Starts with Self

This first interview is from Julia, a woman of color, working in the Dominican Republic focusing on healing and personal development. Note the clarity, focus on self, and brevity of the responses.

What is trust?

“Trust is alignment with ones’ self.”

“You break trust by becoming unaligned with yourself.”

“You restore trust with becoming re-aligned with yourself, honestly something like trust is similar to love. It relates to the relationship you have with yourself – you either have that you do not. For me it is impossible to fully trust somebody else until you are fully aligned with yourself. You need an exemplary form of trust in yourself first, then you have the capacity to give that to others. **When you trust your-self you have the portal to trust someone else.**”

Now as you read the following responses to the three questions, please consider how you are feeling at each juncture. The participants revealed much of themselves.

How do they make you feel about them?

How are they making you feel about trust?

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This young woman is either very insightful, or she has read and is practicing what C.G. Jung wrote years ago. “When the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his/her inner contradictions, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposite halves.” – C.G. Jung, Aion. In her words she is taking a basic psychological understanding and aptly applying it to trust. And she is hinting at the fact that you will need to love yourself.

Let’s continue the notion - get yourself in order – aligned. As you are building self-trust and self-esteem, consider ‘giving yourself’ complete with choice, expectations, and all as “*more of a dance.*”

How would you rate your level of self-trust?	
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10	
Very low trust	Very High trust
What are your reasons for the level you selected?	
Where would you place others on this continuum and why would you place them there?	

Following is what Zaire, a humble nomad, traveling the world, writing poetry, and observing what other cultures have to say.

What is trust?

“Giving yourself to someone with the idea that they can, are able to be dishonest, disloyal, and able to hurt you, but trusting that you as an expectation that they will not do those things. So, you give yourself. For me, at this moment is understanding a relationship by giving yourself realizing that it may not go the way you want it to go, and still believing in the expectation that they will not do that. It is this trust that gives me an experience which is worth the risk of someone being dishonest or disloyal.”

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*“Trust is broken means that you went against those expectations by being disloyal, dishonest, hurting the other. Same as my definition... that seems to be more of a responsibility and that you can choose. **Breaking trust is not always your choice.** However, you must decide: Is it worth the experience, or not. The possibility to build trust is still there. **It is more of a dance;** is it worth the experience or will the hurt be too bad?”*

*“**Trust can be regained, I would say yes, but what do I know.** For me, I say act in a way that most things will be a positive experience. **A repairing or regaining is a choice.**”*

“*Giving yourself*” is a pregnant phrase full of life, meaning, and expectations. In the context of trust, it clearly includes the reality of what is happening, the objective and cognitive actuality. At the same time, it includes all of the risk, the unknowns, and subjective possibilities. ‘But what do I know...’ Perhaps we all need a little more humility.

Do you give of yourself? How do you do that, and what exactly are you giving?

Context is huge.

A young homeless woman, Mia thinks of trust in the most basic terms. Safety, communication, and keeping your word punctuates her perspective.

What is trust?

Trust to me starts ‘stranger danger’ that’s what I like to call it. We are all in that stranger danger situation right now. When you reach out to a total stranger for help it comes down to communication. So far in the situation we have been trusting each other, so **when you start to communicate that is where trust starts.**

How is Trust broken?

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*That is easy, like say you are going to pay someone back by a certain day and you don't; that breaks trust. That's easy. Or, **if you say you are going to give someone something and then you change your mind** – especially if you really need it... that makes sense right away. Or if you say to someone that you are going to help them out, like I'm homeless and **people say they will help and never do.***

*Yeah, it is possible to restore, but it takes time. But **you cannot rebuild it in the same area where they broke it at.** It depends, I am thinking about my parents. When they say they will do something and then they don't that breaks trust and to restore – **I don't think there is any restoring there.** It makes me not ask for anything. It is important that when you know someone, it is important to know where you are with that person, to pay them back, build a relationship. **You gotta' know yourself before you say you will do something.** Be responsible and trusting. Be honest with yourself and with others.*

Context has Mia wanting to trust what people say. When your word is not honored it is not likely to be restored.

Understanding context, where people come from, where they are in life, and how they view others plays a critical role in the levels of trust.

Trust is Mindset First then Behavior

Isaiah C, a young, entrepreneur, world traveler, speaks of self, and the necessity of changing your mindset in order to change your behavior. For him, reliable behavior seems to be quite important.

What is trust?

“So, I would say. Pretty much that through actions you show someone they can trust you meaning doing exactly what you say.”

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“When you break that trust it is when you have lied about whatever you said you were going to do, and you did something different”

*“I would say that trust can be repaired but first the actions must be changed. **You need to change your mind-set in order to change your habits.** Once you change your habits people will begin to see you differently.”*

Behaviors are important. Here Isaiah D., church deacon, boy scout leader, working to empower young black men, shares very personal example of trust and betrayal.

When trust is lost?

*“**Trust is lost when you are betrayed**, when you experience feelings of betrayal. For example, take my auntie. It's hard to trust her. She was going through my stuff without permission and she stole money out my account. In conversation with her I told her how can I believe that your intentions are good when your actions don't match up.”*

*“I can forgive you and I can give you a chance to be in a new light. You have to let the past go and not allow people to run you over. Maya Angelou said: ‘when someone shows you who they really are, believe them.’ I’m not going to allow you to hurt me - I’m going to distance myself. I restored trust with my aunt and found that she was mad at me for not sharing with her that I had HIV. I expressed to her that I couldn't trust her because of the way she drinks. She also called me an HIV positive B****. She said a lot of hurtful stuff and that she hopes I die. How do you think I felt? You got your inner circle and people that you tell personal stuff too, because you feel that deep trust and love. Yes, we restored some trust, but when it comes to money, **we are still working on that.**”*

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For him, trust seems to be something that you need to continually nurture. Full trust does not come quickly nor easily. Perhaps we always need to be working on our trust relationships.

Trust is Personal and Intimate

Tim lights up the room when he walks in. Young, energetic, he elevates the energy with caring and loving humor. Notice his more intimate, spiritual language.

What is trust?

*“Trust is a natural allowing for, giving access to, someone who could possible destroy, decay, or distract who you are or what you are about. It is like giving someone keys to your apartment and knowing that there is a possibility for them to steal, or to wreck it or to ruin it; and you still give them the keys. It’s taking a leap, a **leap of faith** that somebody has the ability to bless you. I would say, in elaboration, that trust is on a spiritual level it is loving somebody like God loves you. It is like love. I would say to someone that I trust them, it is like, **it is synonymous, parallel, to saying, I love you.** If I say I trust you, that is very **intimate**, that is a **spiritual thing for me.**”*

*“Trust is defined differently by different people. For example, if you look at what a ‘trust fall’ is, it is when you innately, and intentionally accept a natural fear of falling. There is also a fear of darkness, there is fear of the unknown, those are natural that society and science has proven to be in all of us. So, a trust fall is you looking at the fears and laughing in its’ face knowing that leaving my feet, falling back into someone’s arms is a physical embodiment of what trust is. Therefore, I would say that **trust is falling into someone’s arms without knowing how strong they are and without knowing they are reliable.**”*

Trust involves communication.

When have you experienced broken trust?

Think about a specific experience.

Are you ready to change that?

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“Trust can be broken by falling and not being caught, I say that literally and figuratively of course. Having a moment when you have a need, and you express that need and then that person, for whatever reason comes up short or doesn’t make the effort to be there during that time breaks the trust. Another way trust is broken is by giving access to someone who ends up using it against you. Like telling you I have XWZ and every time we have a fight you bring it up. I don’t know if I can trust you anymore, ya know.”

Interesting how fear is introduced here. Clearly fear is an aspect of trust, and Tim is not the only one to mention it. Often, we talk about the risk involved in any and all trust relationships. He labels it fear and introduces this concept with a common example that we have all experienced.

Kavon, an eighteen (18) year old Travel Adventures YouTuber speaks of trust in terms of faith in someone, unconditional love, betrayal, and focus on self particularly as you deal with the fears of others. He also shares insights and examples of trust at work.

Please consider the following assumptions. Do you agree with them? Why? Why not?

- Trust transcends fear
- Trust begets trust; fear escalates fear
- When trust is high, relative to fear, people and people systems function well
- Fear constrains and blocks; Trust is a releasing force

Trust gives freedom; fear takes it away

What is trust?

*“**Trust is when you have faith in someone**, and you know that whatever happens **there will be unconditional love** and you do not second guess your thoughts towards them. And if you second guess your thoughts towards them, that means you are going to be insecure – and that just leads to endless mind games. The bond must be secure, that’s what I think...”*

“You break trust when you either betray someone, or you do something that you know will hurt the person, but you do it anyway just to sabotage the

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relationship... which I have done a couple of times 'cause I didn't know how to break the relationship or tell the person straight up.

However, now I know and I have had a lot of trust issues and I take it as trust a person if they switch it up leave them be, it shouldn't matter they are going to live life anyway. Once you start doing that you will be 10 fingers forward.

Examples of breaking trust would be mis-communication, or no communication at all. *I am a huge player in communications. Another example would be when I joke around with people and be sarcastic at the time, but they don't take it as a joke."*

*"Restoring trust; it depends how deep it is initially. You can restore trust and it depends on the person, **you can restore trust just by buying a girl a seven-figure bag, or you can restore trust by talking to somebody who has been sitting on the issue. Explain everything and then say, Oh, if we can get this sorted out, just imagine what else we can get to... and that will multiply things.**"*

*"I would say **focus on yourself.** When you are in a trust relationship you are not the other persons fears. The other person can withhold anything from you at any moment and you will be left empty-handed because you think they are in your possession. And so, if you focus on yourself in the relationship, then usually relationships end well when you focus on yourself when working together on different types of things."*

*"In work situations, with supervisors OK, first off with employees – **never trust an employee until you have been to their house,** or you have been out a couple of times and you have seen how they have interacted with other people. Because sometimes employees will tell the boss anything in order to get a raise even if it is just a one-dollar increase. They want the raise, they want to be liked, and they are willing to do anything to conquer that."*

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“With supervisors, I would say, establish one good relationship with one supervisor. The rest are just acquaintances for now. They are not there forever but you do want to have one good bond with HR member and one good bond with a supervisor ‘cause if anything happens they are going to be the ones to dig deeper. That has worked out for me in many situations.”

Interesting and insightful comments from a young person. Notice how ‘knowing’ someone is important, especially in a work setting. Get to know who you are working with so that you can build a trusting relationship.

What does authenticity mean to you?

How important is authenticity to trust in your mind?

Think about two relationships in your professional life.

What can you do to demonstrate a clearer sense of authenticity?

Feeling safe and supported is important for Gigi, a community activist, speaker, and grant writer. She seems to appreciate the notion of trust in a gentle and thoughtful way as it may even expand her understanding. She also speaks clearly of vulnerabilities; hers and others.

What is trust?

*“I don’t think I have ever answered that question to anybody... **trust is a feeling, like trust oneself, trust others, feeling safe and supported.**”*

*“You break trust when, number one, when there are no boundaries; when there is no clear container or when the container is broken with or by others or broken within your-self. Number two, with lack of clarity, when one is not clear within them-selves or not clear with others. Also, when communication isn’t clear, or when communication is missing; not done at all. When you don’t have integrity, or when you have the wrong intentions. **You need to be in alignment with your integrity.**”*

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“It is very possible to restore trust. Both parties need to come forward.

***Sharing true vulnerabilities helps in restoring trust**, even in yourself when the trust has been broken. When did you not pay your bills on time and you get evicted from your apartment – you let yourself down. You can create mistrust with yourself. Allowing yourself to cry to be mad at yourself, you need some of that to let the healing happen. **Vulnerabilities helps make you authentic**. Sometimes we do not have the language to say that.”*

*“**Allowing the other to be vulnerable is very important** – allow the space where they can be vulnerable. Allow all of the voices to be heard. When restoring trust be authentic, express vulnerabilities, confessed your wrongs and then let the other to be raw, angry, upset. Allow the other to be angry, and to control, question, test the trust. Allow the other side to be heard. Maintain constant communication. This is how you find your voice and the other finds their voice.”*

“I have never been asked questions about trust before. Thank you.”

Gigi is not the only person who appreciates a conversation about trust. First, what does that say about her openness and willingness to trust? Secondly, what does that say about the rest of us who are interested in trust? Obviously, we need to ask more questions, listen more carefully, and share our feelings and perspectives on trust.

Relationship also seems to be paramount. Not only does one need to feel for ones-self, one must also listen to, understand, and feel for the other as well. There seems to be a high sense of responsibility for the relationship and all involved. And in that relationship, feeling safe and supported is key.

Eric is a thoughtful young man who spends time reflecting on trust. His work in assisting others to find employment or further their careers is trust-based. Eric shares examples from personal experience to make his points.

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What is trust?

Security

Commitment

Confiding

Let me share a true case scenario: I researched for Bath Rails to put around the bathtub wall at my home, so my mother who has unstable balance can use them to hold onto while taking a shower. After much research, I found a brand that had very good reviews. With this, I felt comfortable in purchasing them. My main concerns in reading the reviews were:

Security – *They must be secure, so I can TRUST that my mom could hold onto and put her weight against the Rails – with no concerns of falling or the rail coming off the bathtub wall.*

Commitment – *I need my mother to feel, not only secure, but that she could TRUST the rails – therefore, committing her the privilege in taking more showers (feeling comfortable with her TRUST; commitment).*

Confiding – *I allowed my mother to confide in me – that I had done my research on the product, and that I feel totally safe in presenting her the package to use. Her dependency of my TRUST in the product, automatically assured her, to which she could TRUST it too.*

How is trust broken?

Breach of Security

Lack of Commitment

Confiding factor is lost

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One day, my mom was in the bathroom, and all of a sudden, one of the bath rails fell to the floor. She wasn't using it; it just fell. She told me about the strange incident, and I looked into the matter.

Breach of Security – I was astonished! *The incident scared me, and thoughts started flying...What if, mom was in the bath tub, and grabbed the rail, and it fell, the end result could be traumatic! At this point, my TRUST in the product was questioned. I thought, it had great reviews, but now...I'm concerned. I began to occasionally check the rails (after I reinstalled it), to make sure it was secure. My TRUST was broken, and now I am concerned, each time she goes to take a shower – Will it fall?*

Lack of Commitment – *I still have that thought to tug on the rail to make sure it won't fall again. I somewhat don't want mom to use the rail as often as she would like (just that strange thought that goes in my head) I have also noticed mom not using the rails as much as before – loss of commitment; perhaps?*

Confiding factor is lost – *Not only has my full TRUST in the product been broken, my mom is concerned as well. She will have that slight anxiety factor, with the question in the back of her mind, if I use this rail, will it hold me?*

How does one rebuild/restore trust?

Communication & Transparency

Honesty

Communication & Transparency - *I find myself leaning on the great reviews that people wrote regarding the bath rail product. It allows me to TRUST the product, and to give it another chance. It probably was just one of those strange flukes!*

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The communication and transparency of the ‘outside influence’, has caused me to begin to release the inner thoughts and anxiety of the – What if – syndrome and to put the product to the test. I am willing to rebuild and restore my TRUST in the product.

*Honesty – I find that **being honest with myself**, as I go through the journey of rebuilding TRUST in the product, **will automatically portray confidence to my mom, which in return, will help her restore her TRUST in the product**, as well – which helps her gain that confiding factor in TRUSTING my product judgment again.*

“It takes time, observation and dedication to rebuild and restore the TRUST that you initially had, in whatever scenario you find yourself in”.

Eric sums up his experience with being honest with himself, then restoring the trust with his mother, and then the Bath Rail product. Eric appears to understand how trust resonates from self out into the world. He also understands that it does take time, observation, and dedication. Great insights.

Trust is Earned and Given

We have heard that trust is a desire for safety. Indeed, safety is an aspect of trust. We may expect a professor to offer a more comprehensive and complex perspective on trust.

Jeremy enriches us with these insightful comments and expanded understanding of the elements of trust. Trust is not either earned **or** given. Trust is **both earned and given**, it includes choice, safety, holding others confidence, and is demonstrated in our actions.

What is trust?

*“I kind of think about trust in two different ways; you can think about it as a coin. That coin has two different sides. **Sometimes trust is something that is earned**. For example: I am going to trust you because you have proven to*

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*me that you are reliable and I know that you are going to do what I need done whether that is deliver a package or **hold my secrets safely** or **hold my emotions gently** or whatever it might be. Being reliable because you have proven that to me is one side of trust.”*

*“The other side of trust is that **it is a choice to give trust**. So, whether or not you have proven to be reliable, **I can still choose to trust you**. Trust is something that the other person can draw out of me. It is also something that I can give that person even if they are not drawing it out of me. And sometimes I may give a person my trust because I am in a moment of crisis. You know I think we give strangers our trust when you share a glance, a funny glance, or when they bring you your food at a restaurant. Yeah, we just ate food made by strangers. We gave them our trust. Sure, there is some level of accountability that goes in to that too. But if you are just out on the street and make eye contact and you feel trust between people. I think ultimately it is sort of a desire for safety. And either the other person will elicit that sense of safety and draw it out of me or I am going to extend my desire for safety to a person without them requesting it. As a teacher I feel that is what happens the first day of class. The first day of class is like myself and my students are connecting. Hopefully I am putting myself out there by saying ‘I desire safety’ and then hopefully they are doing the same.”*

*“If I were to define trust, in short, **I would define it as a desire for safety**. And then it is something that is drawn out of me, or something that I choose to give to somebody. Is that a good definition?”*

*“How do you break trust? WHOO! How do I break it, or how is trust broken in general? I think that **trust is broken the moment the person feels not safe**. So, I have a dear friend who has had six mis-carriages. I am thinking of a moment in recent history where I have let someone down who is really important to me. It was kind of a dumb little thing, but anyway she has had six*

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mis-carriages and we were in a room with a bunch of other people. Somehow, we started joking about babies and putting babies in others – I cannot exactly remember how this came up, we were being stupid and the stupidity just spiraled out of control. Before I realized it I was making jokes about dead babies in the presence of my friend who had lost six babies. So, in that moment I was no longer a safe person for her. Like those emotions that she has trusted me with, I was not holding those emotions gently. I was not holding them gently at all.”

“And so, I think you lose trust, you break trust, when we unknowingly, or knowingly make the moment or the relationship not safe. Because you are not delivering the package, you are not holding the secret or the emotion the way that person needs you to. And sometimes what is hard is that you don’t even know that you have broken the trust. So, real good friends will tell you when you have done that and give you a chance to apologize.”

“How do you restore that trust? How do you make it safe again? It depends on how you have broken it. In that situation, by just saying that ‘I didn’t even realize what I was doing until I did it. And then all of a sudden, I saw, this is me talking to my friend. Her mood changed and she was clearly upset. Only then I realized what I had partaken in. And so, it is acknowledging your stupidity, or your naivety, or your mistake. So, saying you are sorry, but then also actually doing something to repair the moment, or situation, or relationship so that it is safe again. Not just saying you are sorry, you actually have to do something.”

Restoring trust is more than thoughts and words. Action is required. Thoughts, action, and choice all play a role. Trust is earned, it is also given. It is both/and. In effect, perhaps you are always in control of your trust. You can choose.

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Tee, another professor addresses trust by sharing very close personal examples. She stresses action as well as communication. Tee is a continuous learner understanding that trust needs attention and needs nurturing.

What is trust?

“I build trust by my actions. Start small and get bigger. They have to know I have something to offer them. Regardless what they tell me, I won’t repeat it, unless they are ok with it. You need to be there when they need you, check up on them. Treat them how I want to be treated by people I trust. You must spend time with them. Really get to know someone and ask them how they feel about things so that you will to prevent doing anything to hurt them.

Communication is a big part of trust.”

*“You need to **show them compassion and understanding** even when they don’t think they deserve it. Acknowledge how I feel and how they feel. Also, I think taking responsibility for your faults is important. Show them support them in the manner they need but also provide feedback when appropriate.”*

“I’m a woman of my word, faithful, honest. I try hard to never break trust. Maturing after high school and during my undergrad years I felt that I lost few important relationships that I now miss. That was an unfortunate result of breaking trust or them breaking my trust.”

“Trust can be broken when I go to an outside party for assistance or advice. The other person may not want me to do that. I feel once I have someone's trust it is important to me not to lose it. I feel like when I stop being open, transparent, and/or pull away I lose people's trust. I can shield myself for protection. One of my guy friends told me recently it comes off as me being secretive because I can be closed off when I'm afraid of being hurt. This is something i think about often and is important to me. It is hard for me to trust because of my childhood. So, I have been relearning what it means to me and how I portray it to my love ones.”

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Geo: *“I have been thinking about how inauthentically I trust. I took, and still take some of my relationships for granted. I don’t really let people in. It takes a lot of time and experiences together for me to really get comfortable and open. And even then ... I’m always skeptical and reserved. And so, I want to learn - relearn how to trust and why to trust. I am becoming ok with being hurt while knowing that that is a huge part of being alive just as being loved is.”*

*“I totally get that. **That moment we stop trusting is the moment we stop truly living.** It is hard to acknowledge our emotions, share them and be vulnerable because we don't want to be hurt. When we stop living in fear we start living and connecting with others on a new level. It takes work though because even when you get to that place of reinventing yourself and you get hurt repeatedly we go back to our old ways. I totally understand where you are coming from. **I am just now learning how to reciprocate trust.** Many people trust me but I control how close I let them. It appears as trust but like you said it is not authentic.”*

*“I’m definitely learning and growing. We break the cycle by going through the pain and stop suffering in silence. It is about taking our experiences and learning from them and applying it to the future. We have to acknowledge our true emotions. It helps me to journal to understand our emotions. **Trust goes hand in hand with conflict.** You learn how to deal with conflict you can start to trust again.”*

*“We have to accept the fact that **each person has a piece of the truth.** It is identifying what happened, how one another feels, who we are and how we see ourselves. Do this for both sides. This provides understanding. Why someone did something, their intentions, how they felt, what they said, what they meant to say. After identifying all that it allows you to discuss a plan on how to move forward and prevent future occurrences. What each party needs, how to maintain healthy communication. Implement and evaluate situation. Resolution*

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may be disagreeing on the situation or departing. It is these conflicts bring opportunity for growth.

“You can tell people what you need from them and ask what they need from you. Both can respect that. Always realizing that we are human and people make mistakes. But it is important to look at how things really happened and how do you can prevent them in the future. Sometimes you realize people are in a different head space and maturity and aren't ready for that type of relationship. We all have different lenses shaped by our up-bringing and experience. So, we have to understand others view point.”

“This does not mean let someone continuously make the same betrayal over again. At some point we have to value what we gain from the healthy relationships we make versus avoiding the pain of not trusting. I can say when I moved to DC. I had to learn to trust new people. I also learned how I really don't trust the people I say I do because I'm holding onto past pain. I won't let them cross a line because of their past actions. I never acknowledged them or brought them to the other person's attention.”

“I must acknowledge that you have to keep working on it, not let up. I had reached happiness two years ago and then got sucked back into unhealthy trust relationships by my family. I could tell immediately, and so could everyone else. Our body holds our trauma. I had lost 100lbs and now these last 2 years have gained weight from being depressed. So now I'm focusing on what I need and putting in the work to heal.”

Trust is living and it is all-consuming.

Trust impacts all of you: psychologically, spiritually, and physically. Also be sure to note, that each person holds a piece of truth that plays an important role in the trusting

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relationship. This truth is ‘felt’ by each person. That truth is a belief, perhaps a value. Do we know the other person at that level when building or restoring trust?

Trust is Omnipresent

Glen, a recovering drug addict introduces trust as something that is always there. Trust can, and does, change; however, it is always present.

What is trust?

*“For me, **trust is believing in someone’s vision.** It is backing the play and having the belief in someone even when you don’t see all the pieces. Supporting someone’s vision as they see the endgame, even when the journey seems doubtful or questionable at best.”*

*“I’m speaking on everyday team dynamics. In a relationship and team dynamics I believe **trust is often unseen.** It’s the faith that someone has your best intentions even when you’re not there to see it. A more extreme level of ‘when they’re not in my presence, are they being faithful?’ It’s the way someone speaks and feels about you when it does nothing to benefit them.”*

*“How is trust broken? **I’m not sure trust is actually broken. It’s transformed but it’s not really voided.** Professional or personal dynamics change over time and that’s natural. But finding out someone’s character flaws doesn’t void the trust you had for them. It just changes how we proceed with someone. If I find out someone on my team is moving forward and doesn’t have the best intentions, or even had malicious intentions; it’s not that I don’t trust them, rather it’s that I need to learn to respect his/her vision because they may see pieces in the board that I don’t and maybe it’s that their endgame doesn’t line up with mine. For example, it’s like in a relationship, if she’s cheating, that doesn’t void the trust I have in me to be able to connect with good people. her endgame isn’t mine. And every layer of ‘closeness’ deserves a different level of information and investment.”*

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“I’m not sure it can be “restored” however, it can be strengthened. We don’t forget when someone crosses us. Subconsciously that weight is never going to go away. But that weight can become easier to handle. There is a reason we built that trust to begin with and it’s consistency. It’s about backing the plays and moving forward with mutual purpose. With that we handle the burden of doubt easier.”

Restoring trust (bringing it back to the original state) does not seem to be an issue here. Transforming trust is the issue for Glen. Trust can be transformed. And when the transformation results in a deepened, stronger, more robust trust, we may even say it has been redeemed (reclaiming and converting it from one level of trust to another at more appropriate levels).

Now let’s listen carefully to Mark, a pillar of the community, an activist, and advocate for black men. Listen how his confidence comes through while facing of the reality of fear, all cast in a spiritual, religious manner. Also note near the end of the interview, he starts a discussion with restoration of trust and moves toward redemption.

What is trust?

*“That is a good question. I know what it is... but to put it in words: I would say **confidence**, faith, confidence in, faith in, commitment to, I think trust contains all of those words, including respect. If I were to trust some-one I would have to have confidence in that person. To trust an organization, I would have to have belief or confidence in all those things as well to trust.”*

“How is trust broken? I’d say that someone being unreliable, when you trust someone you have to rely on them. If they are not reliable trust is broken. If someone dishonors you, that breaks the trust level. If someone puts you down. If you are committed to a relationship and someone breaches or dishonors the relationship, is unfaithful – you cannot rely on that person anymore. If someone comes against you that may break your trust. When you have given yourself to someone, let them in to your inner circle, shared your inner thoughts

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and they share that with someone else. When you confide in someone that is trust. When the confidence is shared beyond the inner circle that breaks trust. You felt they were close, you shared, when they become a Judas trust is broken, I am then dishonored, I lose trust.”

*“How would you restore that trust? I think it is possible, however it is a process. Both parties have to be committed to the process. **There needs to be forgiveness, and acceptance.** You cannot wash over stuff, take responsibility for what happened.”*

“First, do you want restoration? You can forgive someone, however that does not necessary restore the trust level. Can it happen, yes. Absolutely, you need to come to a repentant state. You need to take responsibility, take ownership, repent, and then restore. I have been where we have had forgiveness, but restoration – not too sure. Takes time. I am not going to let you back in too soon. That is very hard for anyone, everyone. It does not happen overnight.”

*“I think **it is much harder to restore trust than to lose it.** It is hard and takes time. Developing or restoring trust is hard given previous experience, there is a fear factor. Need to overcome fear of losing something, the fear of someone hurting you needs to be overcome. If you have the fear of losing trust, that fear is debilitating, it can be paralyzing. Fear is a liar. Fear has a lot to do with trust and restoring trust. I like the scripture that says in 2 Timothy 1:7 ‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.’ Oh my... Fear is false expectations appearing real.”*

*“This makes me think. Can you walk in a place of forgiveness without restoring trust? If the relationship/trust is broken... Can you walk in forgiveness without restoring trust? **It is all the matter of the heart.** When you run into the person with whom you have lost trust, can you be in the same space as them? Forgiveness is complete, however, can you live in a place with them. Does that*

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*mean trust has been restored? Can you be in the same room? – **it is a matter of the heart.***”

Perhaps the sentiment of being ‘a matter of the heart’ is understood and accepted in a much broader arena... consider “*When we guide each other toward redemption, that is the best of humanity*” (Joaquin Phoenix, Oscar speech 02.09.2020).

Trust is about redemption, it includes forgiveness, and it has the potential to bring out the best of humanity.

What more can be said?

REDEMPTION

How often has trust been redeemed in your life?

Have you shared that act of redemption?

Will you share that act or acts with at least one more person?

Think of a broken trust in your life currently. Write it down.

What would it look like if that trust relationship were to be redeemed?