

3 Ways to Mend Trust in a Relationship

About five years ago, I wrote this post and decided to tweak it a bit and bring it to you once again. Why? Not only was it a popular topic, but also so many people who comment on my blog have struggled tremendously because trust in their marriage has been breached.

They want to know how what needs to occur to have the foundation of trust restored in their relationship. While I'll specifically be addressing this issue in the context of marriage, the principles apply to all relationships.

Before a couple can start restoring trust in their marriage, there needs to be an admission of wrongdoing by the offending spouse, a sincere request for forgiveness and granting of forgiveness by the offended mate. I've addressed those issue in my past blogs on giving forgiveness and two personal stories for forgiveness: Corrie ten Boom and the family of Ed Thomas.

Do you need to rebuild trust in your relationship? If so, there are a few things you need to know.

First, notice that the word "rebuild" implies that a relationship has been torn down and needs to be established once again. Something you said or didn't say, did or didn't do to your spouse, child, relative or friend has adversely impacted your relationship with them.

Second, trust is not something that anyone owes you. Trust must be earned. That means that you need to provide something to the other person in order for them to trust you once again. It is not something you just do one time, but rather need to display them consistently, day in and day out, over a period of time.

Third, in order to trust you, the other person must have complete confidence that from this day forward:

1. You are who you say you are. Your spouse needs to know that you are genuine and you are the real deal. Whether you are with your family, friends or coworkers, your spouse needs to see that you are the same person wherever you are and whoever you are with. They need to see you living a consistent life. Your spouse needs to know that you are rock solid, not a person whose personality or behavior is constantly shifting.

Also, when you and your spouse got married, you promised to be there for each other “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in death us do part.” You also committed to become “one flesh.” That means the other person should be able to rely upon those promises—that you will not tear the marriage apart and that you will be there, as their husband or wife, no matter what happens.

2. You will always speak the truth. There are no such things as “little white lies” or “half truths.” What you say is either true or it is not. Let me illustrate. If your wife asks you something simple like, “What have you been doing?” Don’t just say, “Mowing the lawn.” If you have also been watching television and checking emails, say so. Remember: Truth is the whole truth. To rebuild trust, speak truth in everything, big and small. Doing so will help build the other person’s confidence in your trustworthiness.

Speaking truth also means not keeping secrets from your spouse. Whether it’s a purchase you made, an addiction you have, an illness you’re experiencing or where you’ve been, nothing should be kept from your spouse. A surprise party may be an exception! Sharing challenges, problems, and your emotions with your spouse may be difficult initially, but will help rebuild trust and ultimately intimacy in your relationship.

3. You will always do what you say you'll do. In simple terms, when you say you'll do something, the other person can *check it off the list* or *take it to the bank*. It's a *done deal*. If for some reason you are unable to do it, let the other person know immediately. Also the seeds of suspicion and distrust seem to germinate when the person working to rebuild the trust does unpredictable things. For example, if you are going to be unusually late coming home from work, tell your spouse and let him or her know why.

As you rebuild trust in your relationship, remember that one of the best things you can do is to ask the other person, "What can I do to earn your trust once again?" Then be sure to listen carefully and take action.

Are you needing to rebuild trust in some area of your relationship with your spouse? Are these thoughts on how to rebuild that trust helpful?