

# Learning to Trust Others

## Objective

To identify why you might distrust others and find ways to increase your trust with appropriate people.

## What to Know

Do you have a hard time trusting other people? Maybe a loved one betrayed you, or you found out a friend lied to you. Perhaps you worry you are going to be hurt again, or you constantly question if what others tell you is true. Maybe you distrust a certain group or institution.

What is trust? If you trust others, you:

- let them know how you feel, and you are confident they will respect you and not take advantage of you.
- share your thoughts with others, trusting they will not gossip about you.
- are confident others support you, even when you are vulnerable or make mistakes.
- assume others will not intentionally hurt or abuse you.
- create relationships built on mutual respect, caring, and concern.
- easily discuss personal information.
- rely on others to treat you in a fair and honest way.

Check off any of the following statements that apply to you.

\_\_\_\_\_ I've been hurt in the past and I won't be hurt again.

\_\_\_\_\_ People are out to get all they can from me.

\_\_\_\_\_ As soon as I let my guard down, I'll be hurt or used.

\_\_\_\_\_ No one can be trusted.

\_\_\_\_\_ I'm always hurt by the ones I love.

\_\_\_\_\_ No one respects me.

\_\_\_\_\_ All men / women are dishonest.

\_\_\_\_\_ Everyone is out to get me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I'm never successful in choosing friends and/or romantic partners.

\_\_\_\_\_ As soon as I open up to someone, they hurt me.

\_\_\_\_\_ There is no such thing as a healthy relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_ People don't really change.

\_\_\_\_\_ The only person I can trust is myself.

- \_\_\_\_\_ If I relax my defenses I will get hurt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Most people only manipulate me to get what they want.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There's no such thing as a fair employer, generous company, or supportive workplace.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It's better to be alone than risk getting hurt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I'll never share my true feelings because others will use them against me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Total the checked statements.

If you checked off more than five statements, you might have problems trusting others.

What do you need to develop trust? Here are some characteristics of people who trust others. They have:

- faith in the goodness of others.
- hope for the future.
- faith in the fairness of life.
- a belief in a power greater than themselves.
- the ability to forgive and empathize with others.
- healthy communication skills.
- a willingness to self-disclose and be vulnerable.
- authenticity.
- the ability to let go of fear.
- self-acceptance.

This worksheet will help you increase your trust in others.

### **What to Do**

First, answer the following questions.

Do you distrust certain people, groups, or institutions? If yes, explain.

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What are your reasons for distrusting them?

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How does this lack of trust affect your life?

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Why do you think you distrust others? Describe the circumstances that contributed to your lack of trust.

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Write down 2-3 beliefs that hold your distrust in place.

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What are some traits you can acquire or develop to increase your trust in others?

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Next, complete the following activities.

**Write a Letter**

Write a letter to a person you distrust. List your reasons for the lack of trust and feelings and beliefs you have. Tell the person what you are willing to do to build trust. Include what you will do to change this situation and outline what you are unwilling to do. Once you have written the letter you have three choices: send it, save it, or destroy it.

What will you do with your letter? \_\_\_\_\_

Was it easy or hard to write this letter? Explain.

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### Trust Walk

Ask someone you are having problems trusting to spend at least 20 minutes with you. Each of you will take turns being blindfolded for thirty minutes. The person leading the way (the “guide”) will follow these steps.

1. Lead the blindfolded person in a park, around a mall, or in a neighborhood. Determine the route and destination of the walk.
2. Give clear and precise verbal instructions but avoid holding on to or grabbing the blindfolded person. Only allow them to hold on to your left upper or lower arm or elbow.
4. Answer any questions the blindfolded person might have.
5. At the end of the first thirty-minute walk, exchange roles. Proceed with the second part of the walk for another thirty minutes.

When both of you have played each role, each of you can answer the following questions.

How comfortable was I trusting you?

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How comfortable was I in the “guide” role?

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How comfortable was I in the “blindfolded” role?

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How important was mutual trust in making the trust walk successful?

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What were my feelings as I was being blindfolded?

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What were my feelings as the guide?

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How clear were my verbal instructions when I was the guide?

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How could I have improved my guidance?

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How willing were you to accept my guidance?

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What does this experience tell us about our trust of each other?

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What does this experience tell me about my fear of loss of personal control?

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What does this experience tell us about changes we need to make to develop mutual trust?

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How willing are we to take a trust walk each month or until we have established trust in each another?

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Are there obstacles or blocks to developing trust?

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What are we willing to do to continue developing trust in each other?

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## Reflections on This Exercise

Did this exercise help you identify why you distrust others and find ways to build trust? Why or why not?

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Did you experience any challenges while completing this activity? What was hard? Easy? Explain.

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn during this exercise?

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