

# Understanding How Trauma Impacts Trust

## Objective

To identify how to rebuild trust after a trauma.

## What to Know

After trauma, it is normal to have problems with trust. Underneath trust is a belief that others are reliable and responsible. When you develop basic trust, you grow as a healthy, self-reliant person with good self-esteem. You trust yourself and others.

Over the course of your life, people hurt you, take advantage of you, and do other harmful things, all of which can lead you to disbelieve, distrust, doubt, and become cynical or skeptical. These are normal reactions but difficult to live with as you try to maintain healthy, productive relationships.

To rebuild trust, you first need to become aware of why you stopped trusting. This worksheet will help you identify how to rebuild trust.

## What to Do

Think about situations with people that influenced your trust. Put a check next to the items below that apply to you. Someone:

hurt or attacked you (physically and/or emotionally).

stabbed you in the back when you least expected it.

abandoned you in a dangerous situation.

took advantage of you.

cheated on you.

was disloyal by showing an absence of allegiance, devotion, obligation, or faith.

stole important things from you.

was deceitful by deliberately misleading you.

took credit for your achievements.

lied.

was unfaithful in different situations.

was dishonest by breaking rules to gain an unfair advantage in a competitive situation.

failed to help when you needed it.

made mistakes.

\_\_ disappointed you.

\_\_ made promises they failed to keep.

\_\_ showed a lack of concern for your feelings and needs.

\_\_ forgot things that were important (like an anniversary or birthday).

\_\_ kept secrets.

Write down other situations that happened to you.

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Choose one of the above situations, circle it, and answer the following questions.

What did you think while it was happening?

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What did you feel when it was happening?

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What did you do when it was happening?

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What would you do now?

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Name the people in your life with whom you have concerns about trust.

On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do I feel I can trust \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
(where 1 = I cannot trust this person at all, to 10 = I trust this person completely)

Why?

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On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do I feel I can trust \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
(where 1 = I cannot trust this person at all, to 10 = I trust this person completely)

Why?

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On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do I feel I can trust \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
(where 1 = I cannot trust this person at all, to 10 = I trust this person completely)

Why?

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On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do I feel I can trust \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_  
(where 1 = I cannot trust this person at all, to 10 = I trust this person completely)

Why?

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Describe a situation when one of the above people hurt you.

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How did you feel?

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Can you tell the person how deeply you were hurt? Why or why not?

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If you can have a conversation with this person, let them know what you need to rebuild trust. Write about your experience.

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Can you forgive this person? Why or why not?

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Can you trust this person again? Explain.

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Can you forgive yourself? Some people think if they were more clever or wise, this would not have happened to them. Is this true for you? Explain.

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How will you know you have changed your feelings and behaviors regarding trust? Describe.

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What can others do to support you as you move toward trust and away from trauma?

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

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

What did you learn from this exercise?

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