

Trust

Healthy Relationships

Trust is a super important part of a healthy relationship, but it's something that many people struggle with, for a lot of different reasons.

What does trust mean? Trusting someone means that you think they are reliable, you have confidence in them and you feel safe with them physically and emotionally. Trust is something that two people in a relationship can build together when they decide to trust each other. You can't demand or prove trust; trusting someone is a choice that you make.

How Do I Build Mutual Trust in a Relationship?

Building trust within a healthy relationship happens gradually. How do you know if you should trust someone? This can be a hard question to answer, especially at the beginning of a relationship, but your own instincts about another person and the way they behave over time are two important things to consider when making that decision.

Of course, in a healthy relationship it's important for *both* partners to trust and be trusted, to open up and be vulnerable with each other. Trust can't be built if only one partner is willing to do this and the other isn't. **Building trust requires mutual commitment.** So, as your relationship progresses, ask yourself:

Is My Partner There for Me (and Am I There for Them)?

We're not just talking about being there physically, but emotionally, too. Does your partner listen to you and support you? Are they sensitive to your problems, worries and fears? Do they show compassion and genuinely care about you? A person who is trustworthy is able to demonstrate consideration and care of others. This also means that they trust *you* to know what's best for yourself. A partner who tells you they know best, or that you don't know how you really feel, isn't showing that they trust you.

It's also important to keep in mind that in a healthy relationship, you can trust that no matter what comes up your partner won't react in a way that threatens your safety or harms you. Everyone deserves to be in a relationship with someone who can resolve conflicts in a healthy, respectful way.

Is My Partner Consistent (and Am I Consistent with Them)?

Each person in a relationship demonstrates their trustworthiness through consistency in their actions. The first behaviors you look at might be relatively small, like showing up for dates at agreed-upon times. Keeping private information just between the two of you and always respecting boundaries are other clues someone is dependable. Again, learning these things in a relationship happens gradually, as you *both* show that you are consistent with your actions not just occasionally, but all the time.

Does My Partner Say What They Mean and Do What They Say (and Do I Do the Same)?

Another way a person shows they are trustworthy is when their words and behavior match up. You've probably heard the phrase, "That person is all talk." It generally means that someone's words and actions don't really correspond; they say one thing and do another. For example, if someone says they love you, and then they act abusively toward you, their words and actions don't match. When you love someone, you do not abuse them.

Many people who contact loveisrespect are in relationships where one partner is constantly checking in, asking where the other partner is at all times, and/or trying to control who their partner spends time with. These behaviors aren't healthy or signs of trust; again, trust is a choice you make. You can trust someone whether they're right next to you or a long distance away. When there is trust, a person doesn't feel a *need* to monitor or control their partner. They don't need their partner to "prove" their love and faithfulness. It's a *lack* of trust that makes those behaviors feel necessary. If you trust someone, you trust them regardless of who they spend time with or where they go. You trust that, even if someone else wanted to hurt your relationship, your partner wouldn't let that happen.

My Trust Was Broken in the Past. How Can I Trust Again?

If you've been burned in the past, it's understandable that you might have a hard time trusting other people. It can help to remind yourself that your new partner is NOT your old partner (or your friend, family member, or whoever broke your trust before), and making assumptions about them based on the actions of a completely different person isn't really fair. Even if you've been hurt before, that's not an excuse for checking up on your new partner or demanding that they prove their trustworthiness to you. As we've said, trust is a choice, and building on that trust within a relationship takes time. When we

begin a relationship with someone, we're making the choice to trust them. If you feel that you aren't able to trust anyone else right now, you might not be ready to be in a relationship.

It's worth noting that being able to trust *yourself* is an important component in trusting others. Being hurt by someone in the past may have affected your ability to trust yourself and your own instincts. Just remember that the person who broke your trust in the past made that choice; you can't take responsibility for someone else's actions or decisions. If you're struggling with this, taking time to work through it, maybe with a counselor or therapist, could be very helpful in regaining trust in yourself and your ability to trust others.