

The Courage to Trust – Cynthia Wall

Trust is a factor in every interaction you have. You can be unaware of a conflict until your sense of trust is gone. (Intro)

No one is born knowing how to trust. Life gives us many teachers, some caring and others cruel. Few people receive a solid base of trust as children. Trust is a skill to be learned and a choice to be made. (5)

It is an adult task to learn to trust ourselves. Although the rules are based on common sense, they are in common practice. (7)

Trust is not one-dimensional. It is a feeling, choice, skill. Trust is the heartbeat of every single relationship, with yourself as well as with others. (8)

Choosing to trust can be so automatic that you don't even recognize when you made the decision. Placing blind trust in someone is dependency, not trust. (10)

We don't have permission or a common language to support that "trusting is always your choice." When you can fully embrace that you have the right to choose whether or not to trust someone, it is possible to make mutual agreements that suit each situation. Learn to use your fears as a guide to what you really want out of your relationships. (11)

Trust Skill Building:

The Trust Check-In: privately acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and needs without judgement or acting them out.

Finding Out What You Want: ask yourself what you want from a situation, and what you are willing to risk to achieve it. (12)

Different Types of Trust:

1. Self-trust,
2. Faith in a Positive Future,
3. and Trusting Others. (12)

Self-trust: I know what I feel and think, and I can express it thoughtfully. I follow an ethical code. I take care of myself. I listen to feedback and decide for myself what I will do. I know what I want and go for it. (13)

It is scary to be truly honest with other people until you know you can count on yourself and know that you will survive if you have to be alone. Keeping promises to yourself, as well as to others, is fundamental to building self-trust and achieving independence. (13)

Faith in a Positive Future: Willingness to go forward. Does not depend on a single situation, person, or belief. Is an expanded view of self-trust, and it is so individual that no example from others can perfectly match your experience. (16)

Each of us has a measure of faith. We wouldn't be able to function without it. The determination to return to a positive outlook demonstrates the level of faith that someone holds. Faith is not a belief to be taught of a mystical state of grace. It is something we do. From the earliest usage in many cultures,

faith was considered an action. We act on faith when we deliberately envision good results in the face of uncertainty.

The practice of having faith enables you to name what you want and overcome obstacles in achieving it. A common misperception is that faith eliminates fear. It doesn't. Faith allows you to act despite fear. (16)

Your Three Core Selves:

1. Child;
2. Protector;
3. Adult (21)

Child: Playful, seeks belonging.

Protector: Steps in when the Child feels scared; quick to anger and push away when there is perceived harm. It is the inner critic to avoid revealing too much. Is in charge when there is strong anger, self-hate, or despair.

Adult: Responsible to make life work. Is in charge when there is confidence, compassion. Needs the Child and Protector to keep life in perspective. (22)

It is possible for the same situation to evoke fight, flight, freeze, or faint in different people. (26)

Qualities that indicate a high self-confidence and mature thinking: empathy, compassion, forgiveness of self and others, taking responsibility, realizing many sides to a story, releasing bad habits, recognition that you can survive. (29)

Strong Adult: Holds courage to act in spite of feeling anxious and uncertain; inventor and guardian of your life's choices; emotional resilience. (30)

When the Adult cannot reassure the Child quickly enough, the Protector steps in to make the pain go away. (33)

Intimacy:

Intimacy deserves a very personal definition. (37)

Building blocks of intimacy: telling the truth, asking for what you want, listening with an open mind, speaking up when hurt, acknowledging overreactions, having the faith that you both will be okay. (40)

Barriers to intimacy: anything that stops you from sharing freely about yourself; enmeshment; instant intimacy; idealizing others. (41)

Enmeshment is the complex of feelings and beliefs that causes you to stay in a situation to please someone else. Your needs become secondary to the survival of the relationship. Intimacy is impossible when you let someone else control the level of honesty in your relationships. You are enmeshed if you think you need the other person's permission to leave. (42)

Circles of Belonging: Soul Mates– Intimates– Friends– Companions/Coworkers– Acquaintances (49)

Forms of Betrayal:

1. Deliberate;
2. Careless;
3. Unintentional;
4. Subconscious.

Deliberate: Disregard or discount the suffering caused to another person.

Careless: Self-absorption and temporary absence of empathy.

Unintentional: Misunderstandings or unavoidable circumstances.

Subconscious: Unacknowledged conflicts; hidden resentment; sense of inadequacy. (56)

Child reacts with helplessness. Protector leaps to right and wrong. Adult responds to the whole story. (61)

Challenging uncertainty: “If I can understand it,” will help you survive the uncertainty caused by upsets. Ask yourself if the action feels deliberate, careless, unintentional, or subconscious. (62)

Reconciling betrayal:

Dear _____. I am angry that you _____. I am upset that _____.
I am scared that _____. I feel guilty that _____. This reminds me of _____.
What I want to happen is _____. What I appreciate about you is _____. Sincerely, _____. (66)

When you feel betrayed, your response is based on your history and the stories you tell yourself. When you betray others, you observe betrayal from a different perspective. Guilt is a powerful teacher but a terrible master. (69)

Four Different Forms of Betrayal:

1. Passive dishonesty and avoiding conflict; 2. Unintended and misinterpreted actions; 3. Impulsive and thoughtless acts; 4. Deliberate deceit and acts of revenge. (70)

Withholding is as damaging to trust as deliberate betrayal. Not stating your needs is a passive form of dishonesty. (70)

Protesting your innocence can lead to blame instead of understanding. (73)

A simple rule to test if you have been acting from childish motives. Ask yourself, “How would I feel if someone at the same level of intimacy did to me what I am doing to them?” (74)

People with deep unmet needs for belonging often seek revenge on those who hurt them. Rejection or disrespect can push them over the edge. The power of these impulses reveals how profoundly they are split inside. (75)

Adult is not in control when there is desperation (Child) or inner rage (Protector). The antidote is complete examination of your personal life and choices. (75)

Deep fears and unmet needs often are at the root of compulsive acts. Compulsion isn’t about hurting others. Lying is deliberate betrayal. Intimacy and trust can never be built on active dishonesty.

Shame prevents us from opening our hearts to those we’ve hurt. It keeps us from learning from our mistakes and imprisons us in despair. Everyone bears some guilt and regrets. It is proof that you are merely human, not evidence that you are a bad person pretending to be good. (77)

Your self-worth should not be measured only by how often you have broken trust or betrayed by those you love. Real self-worth increases when you learn from your mistakes and give tender regard to others who feel betrayed by you. It matters less what form of betrayal it is than how well you handle the aftermath of confusion and hurt.

Healthy guilt can drive you to seek self-awareness and guidance from others. Shame makes you so self-absorbed that you may ignore important boundaries.

Those who have been hurt need to be in control. Your need to be understood is less important than their right to feel safe. The compulsion to give excuses come from the Protector. Your Adult needs to take responsibility for your actions. (78)

Taking responsibility frees you from shame and helplessness, and you can focus on resolving problems that you can do something about. Examine your own intentions and behavior whenever you have been involved in a betrayal. (80)

Ask from the other's perspective, "What do I want to hear from the one who hurt me?"

Warning: It is meaningless to say, "I'm sorry if you felt I was..." You either validate the person's perceptions or you don't. The joy comes when you find that you can survive being wrong. The cycle of hurt and blame is stopped. If you choose to speak to the one you have betrayed, the other person is not obligated to listen. (82)

Those who feel betrayed will control how much lost trust and intimacy can be rebuilt. Even if the break in trust seemed minor to you, it may have recalled a much bigger betrayal from the other person's past, one that he or she cannot easily release.

Some will decide not to trust you again. Accepting their rejection is the last amend you need to make. Accept your mistakes as a necessary part of reclaiming your authentic self. (83)

Forms of Self-Betrayal:

Do you: Break resolutions that would help yourself? Delay your plans for the convenience of others? Worry more than actively finding solutions? Talk negatively to yourself? Add to the to-do list without realigning expectations? Carelessly spend money? Endanger yourself with your habits? Delay getting medical or emotional help? Procrastinate? Dwell on your mistakes? (86)

Perfectionism is a habit your Child learned in self-defense. Lose the need to be right, and you gain the right to be loved. Those who sacrifice their own happiness for the needs of others suffocate their own self-expression. (89)

The impulse toward self-sacrifice fades the moment you choose to question if it is still necessary. (90)

Although you needn't go it alone, it's your job to plan what you want to achieve and how to get where you want to go. You can do this by considering what you are ready to change and what you want to achieve. There is great power in writing down your desired goals, even if you can't act on them instantly. (95)

Once you name your automatic reactions, you can then invite hidden feelings and thoughts by expressing the entire range of emotions. (102)

The three types of trust (self-trust; faith in a positive future; trust in others) form the foundation of your pattern of trust. All three types are operating all the time, whether you are aware of them or not. A weakness in any of the three types of trust determines where you tend to get stuck. (102)

Choosing to give and receive trust is an act of wisdom and emotional resilience. (110)

Building Trust with Others:

When you trust others, you no longer want to control them. You want to understand and support them and able to ask for their understanding and support in return. You increase your capacity to listen to hard truths when you know you can survive, even thrive, if a relationship doesn't turn out as you'd hope. (111)

Rewards from trust that make risks worthwhile: 1. Assumptions are cleared; 2. Genuine apologies are exchanged; 3. Broken rules are addressed; 4. Misunderstandings no longer cause that old panic. (112)

Five Steps toward Honesty:

1. Explore thoughts/feelings privately; 2. Address past sources of strong feelings; 3. Assess real and current dangers; 4. Set aside false assumptions; 5. If risk is worthwhile, invite a conversation. (114)

Stay or Go?

We often delay the ending because the shock of separation is more frightening than the dull ache of disappointment.

Three cords that bind us to difficult relationships: 1. Enmeshment; 2. Ambivalence; 3. Fear of Abandonment. Each is a form of emotional dependency. (128)

Enmeshment is a form of learned helplessness. They need someone to depend on but are afraid of genuine intimacy. It is an unequal relationship and is destructive. (132)

Ambivalence is a tangle of two strong opposing emotions. Having two mutually exclusive feelings at the same time. Relationship ambivalence is the result of problems that seem to improve but then reappear. (133)

Nothing can replace trust as proof of love. Making any relationship work is a shared responsibility. The root of "relationship" is relate, which means to tell. (137)

Habits to Build Trust with Self and Others:

It is more important to be trusted for years than to be liked for a few minutes. (142)

1. Speak with compassionate honesty; 2. Express gratitude and courtesy to everyone; 3. Make promises only if you intend to keep them; 4. Put those you love ahead of others; 5. Say "I'm sorry" and mean it every time you hurt someone's feelings; 5. Clear up assumptions immediately. (143)

Trusting someone is not an all-or-nothing experience. (145)

Determine what nurturing yourself and nurturing others means to you personally. (149)

Magic Circle of Trust:



Outside the circle: People, Activities, Habits, Attitudes, Beliefs that are limiting. (150)

Become your own best friend. Your self-nurturing and self-reliance frees yourself and others. (154)

Claiming your authentic self will free you from the old idea that love is proven by constant self-sacrifice. In fact, your ability to help others greatly improves when you detach from their limits and work on loving and trusting yourself.

No one should trust other people completely. It is a betrayal to them to expect they'll anticipate your needs and never be selfish or break a promise. Certainty is an illusion. You also need to cultivate faith as an antidote to your old stories of being flawed. Faith comes to you as a reward for trusting in your own experience. (154)