

Trust In Relationships

We learn to trust early in infancy; trusting we will be fed, diapers changed; that we will be kept comfortable and comforted. We learn to trust from our parents, our families and our teachers. We grow up and form relationships, in part all based on the level of trust we have learned from these fine folks. Eventually most of us marry. We join with a partner, a husband or wife and build a partnership on trust. Or do we?

Are we “building trust” or building walls with those most important to us?

Statistics will tell us walls are being built, and wars have been waged. Our society has a 67%+ divorce rate. It is more common or “normal” to divorce than to stay married! As a society we are not building trust in our most important of relationships...And Why not? because most folks just haven’t learned how.

In his newest book: “The Science of Trust-Emotional Attunement for Couples”ⁱ John Gottman Ph.D. reveals the “how” of trusting as well as the many subtle forms of betrayal that go on in relationship...

From his book: **“A committed romantic relationship is a contract of mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual protection, and mutual nurturance.”** (The Science of Trust: p 350)

Dr. Gottman has spent the last 30 years researching ‘couples’. He has developed a theory of marital discord and happiness and with great accuracy can predict divorce or a happy marriage! Quite simply this remarkable research has led to the development of simple tools that work. There *is* a science of trust and there are specific components that are inherent in trust, trusting and being trustworthy.

In the article that follows I will share the components of trust and how to build trust. I will also share from Gottman’s “The Science of Trust” the 12 specific ways (other than sexual infidelity) that betrayal shows up in relationships.

You have the opportunity to build love and intimacy instead of walls and wars. You, how you are and what you do matters! And, as you may already know, loving always works better.

Trust is the deliberate and delicate balance between hope, belief and reliance.ⁱⁱ We are always trusting ourselves and others: sometimes poorly, sometimes adequately and sometimes magnificently! It is the hinge to love,



caring and intimacy. Trust cannot be nurtured in a relationship beset with betrayal.

Trust like [love, is a verb](#). When we trust we 'rely' on something or someone we are trusting. When we can be relied upon we are being trustworthy. The action of relying upon is inherent in 'trusting'; we are or we are not 'trusting' at some level.

Here are the 4 Components of Trustⁱⁱⁱ.

1. **There must be a beneficial and a harmful result possible.** When we 'risk' trusting we are hoping for a potentially beneficial outcome over the possibility of a harmful result. If you tell a friend a secret, the hope is that you can trust your friend to keep the secret rather than to reveal it. If you form a business partnership or marry there is the possibility of beneficial or harmful results.
2. **The result of risking and trusting depends upon the future.** Whether it is a friend keeping a secret, a partner keeping an agreement or fidelity in marriage, the outcomes are in the future.
3. **The harm must be potentially more harmful than the benefit is beneficial.** Why does this matter? It has to do with the emotional payoff involved! When we bet on a horse or play the lottery the belief that we will win is much lower. If we bet \$5.00, we are only out \$5.00, there is very little risk.

When we are involved in a business venture or are in a marriage there are multiple levels and contexts where trust or walls are built. In business and marriage our livelihood and well-being are "at stake" and "on the line". We have large emotional, physical, financial and other investments in the outcome. When we share a secret with a friend we are risking more if the secret is revealed than if it is not, and the 'trust' is more limited to this specific context.

4. **We honestly expect the benefit to occur.** At a horserace or lottery we would like to win, we might hope to win, yet for most of us that is where it stops. We don't actually "believe" we will win! When we trust, we have hope with the belief that we can rely on the person or thing to produce the result we want. If it is a business venture then the amount of 'trust' we have may have to do with our business abilities accepting a certain amount of risk involved.

Specifically for Married Folks

In a marriage the issue of trust is multi-faceted. Some agreements are made consciously while many agreements are made covertly and left unspoken until broken. We learn in our marriages to rely partners in some areas, and not in others: housecleaning, finances, children, future planning, emotional support, sexual satisfaction, and more. Clear agreements are made openly, verbally stated and discussed; they can be agreed upon. Most often each spouse has unspoken beliefs and expectations of how things 'should be'. They "think" these things are agreed upon as "common sense". These agreements are only revealed when these unspoken agreements are broken, and one partner feels betrayed.

Gottman's research shows how these 'agreements' that go on in marriage will indicate trust levels by measuring interactional patterns. The research also shows great accuracy in predicting potential success in coaching or therapy as well as whether a couple will stay together or divorce. It's NOT just the 'big' betrayals that matter: infidelity, lying, emotional or physical abuse. The results of study after study show that the biggest indicator of a lasting marriage is: ***The perception of trust in the relationship.***

There are many ways that we can actively build trust and love in relationship. Gottman recommends a 5:1 ratio (nice to neutral and "non-nice" interaction) to insure of a healthy relationship. I have written elsewhere with ways to do so. (See article: [Love is a Verb](#))

I'll end the article today with Gottman's list of 12 ways that partners betray each other in relationship. It is my hope that if you recognize these types of betrayal in your relationship, you can do something to change it... and live happily ever after.

Yes, sleeping around is a big way to ruin a committed relationship but there are others that are as devastating. Gottman has identified 12 more, here they are.

Twelve Ways (Other than Sexual Infidelity) to Betray Your Partner^{iv}:

1. **Violations of commitment.** Your commitment is conditional, and some part of you is still waiting for someone better to come along. You may check out other people, flirt, or in other ways suggest you are still available. Illness, arguments, money issues, distance (travel, work)...when the going gets tough you consider going.
2. **Betrayals of emotional exclusivity.** Flirtations or secret emotional attachments.
3. **Secrets, lies, deceptions.** These include lies of omission, deceptions, and violations of confidence, broken promises, and inconsistencies.
4. **Coalitions against your partner.** You form coalitions that hurt or exclude your partner, talk negatively behind their back, etc.
5. **Disinterest.** You are disinterested in or rejecting of your partner's thoughts, feelings or inner life.
6. **Unfairness or lack of care.** Resources, time and responsibilities are not shared equally, and partners do not offer emotional support or understanding. They are not "there" for one another.
7. **Betrayal of affection.** Coldness, unresponsiveness.
8. **Lack of sexual interest.** Ignoring your partner's need for sexual intimacy, physical closeness and touch.
9. **Abuse.** Social isolation, sexual degradation, humiliation, belittling, threats, property damage, physical abuse.
10. **Disrespect.** Partners do not cherish each other, express pride, and complement each other. Instead, they ridicule, denigrate, mock, use sarcasm, contempt.
11. **Not meeting each other's needs.** (Copied verbatim from p 352): A relationship is about legitimating dependency upon each other. Partners violate the principle that they should try to meet each other's essential needs cooperatively and honestly. This involves agreeing to emotional presence, openness, emotional availability, and responsiveness to the partner. They do not agree, or act as if they do not agree, that the relationship will entail sacrifice at times, putting one's partner's needs or the family's needs ahead of one's own.
12. **Breaking sacred promises and vows.**

Brutal? Yes sometimes.

Is it happening in your relationship? In the relationship of close friend?



If you recognize some of these various ways spouses/partners betray each other, then ouch and good! Recognition is the first step toward change.

Acknowledge that something is wrong, talk with your beloved then change! Unless of course you're building those walls before the final battle; intimacy feels so much better!

It's not easy, not at all. If you are like so many other couples and just need a bit of guidance ***please contact me***. I offer **free sample sessions**. Here is a testimonial from a fine woman who DID *contact me for a free session* last year (2010)

"I want to tell you that you were invaluable to me during a very tough time last year. We only spoke on the phone as an intro, but I will be forever grateful for your words to me that day Jim. You helped set me on a very good path. Thank you! Cindy"

Call 847-748-8006 or write Jim@TrulyHumanCoaching.com today, I can help you get started; your marriage is worth your time and energy.

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Enjoy building Trust. Here are other sources for you to help you identify less than healthy patterns in your life. I have written elsewhere about the [subtle signs of emotional abuse](#), [lethal patterns that can ruin relationship](#) and how we learn them ([Normal? Socialization, Domestication and Consensus Hypnosis](#) & [Co-Dependency-Our Social Disease](#)) Blessings.

ⁱ The Science of Trust, John Gottman, Ph.D

ⁱⁱ Quoted Directly from Lazaris audio download: "Synergy of Trust" www.lazaris.com

ⁱⁱⁱ ibid

^{iv} The Science of Trust, John Gottman, Ph.D