

Trust

A foundation for relationship

What is trust?

Trust is a loaded concept in our culture. It is tossed around with assumed meaning and expectations throughout politics, within organizational messaging and among romantic relationships. It is often assumed to be something that is either there or not, something we expect we hold a shared definition, and something that is not easily repaired.

What assumptions and expectations about trust do you have?

The Dictionary Definition of Trust

Reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.

What is trust exactly?

Trust is the currency of relationships, a powerful resource we can direct within and interpersonally that allows us to thrive in our lives. Trust generates the foundation of community and fuels the interactions between all people ultimately driving action.

People experience trust differently, and there is no right or wrong way. We all have different histories and sensitivities to environmental factors, as well as variable thresholds for risk and capacities for ambition.

More trust is not better; however, discerning the nuanced ways of generating trust and developing the skills to repair it when it is inevitably broken are worthwhile pursuits.

Trust is delicate and requires care and attention. We may tear it easily with a harsh word or an unfulfilled promise, and then work tirelessly—and skillfully—to restore it.

Trust builds—gets wider and deeper—over time, as it is nourished with shared experiences and successes

of repairing. This is true within relationships and within individuals and why trust is a source of self-worth.

Trust is a fluid experience, it is not a thing. It is subject to moods, sensations, projections, to the past, and to experiences in other domains of our lives.

Trust Inventory:

- Define or describe trust, as you understand it.
- Who do you trust? What makes you trust them?
- Do you trust yourself? Are you trustworthy? Why or why not?
- What is the source of your trust?
- How does trust allow or prevent you from experiencing joy, passion, or fulfillment in your life?
- What would you like to learn about trust? What can you learn from it?
- What, if anything, would change about your definition or relationship to trust?

We believe that how we treat other community members when trust had been damaged can be the single greatest move to create a context of sufficiency.

Generating and Restoring Trust

As you can see, restoring trust is central to the practice of trust itself. In the West, we are raised not to trust, that it must be earned, and that if you are lucky enough to have it, if it gets broken, that's it—never trust (that person, place, thing) again. The messages are pervasive: "Don't trust everything you hear." "You can't trust strangers." Even, "You can't trust the weather (or the 'weatherman')." "

What happens in such a cultural environment is that we step over our gut feelings about people and situations



until we eventually discover that we can't trust ourselves. We may override our inclination to connect, to be vulnerable and willing to open and share ourselves with others, instead choosing to "play it safe." Alternatively, we sometimes override our suspicions about a person's capacity to be reliable to perhaps prove the cultural or familial messages are wrong. Then that trust is broken, the messages are confirmed and we retreat into isolation and separation.

When we begin to explore trust—trust that has space to be broken and repaired, trust that includes the truth of our humanity—we may notice that we can speak the truth to one another. We may hand a neighbor a key to our house, tell our spouse a password to our e-mail, have a friend hold our money for us while we are developing a new savings practice or share a brilliant idea with a co-worker and develop it together. We can also build the muscle to bestow trust first before someone has earned it. These seemingly risky behaviors give us access to intimacy—in ourselves and interpersonally.

In this experiment of trust, we create the context in which we can declare 100% of what we want 100% of the time. We find the courage to say what needs to be said. We can tell our family member that his/her demands don't work for us. We can say, "Actually I don't want to cook the holiday meal for the tenth year in a row."

Our capacity for trust repair determines who we are in our communities and how we stand within exquisite sufficiency. Trust repair requires a few ingredients:

- Offering compassion
- Showing empathy to ourselves and others
- Telling the truth to ourselves
- Telling the truth to others
- Empowering others to respond with their truth
- Capacity to be with polarity, two opposing truths
- Loving another and self in the face of disagreement
- Ability to let go of strong emotions
- Willingness to rejoin a relationship knowing all beings are imperfect

Repairing Trust Inventory:

- What above capacities to repair trust do you have?
- Which ones can you develop?
- What stories about trust from the past do you keep alive today?
- What would become available if you allowed yourself to trust?

ABOUT SEVEN STONES

Seven Stones is a leadership journeys company founded by Gina LaRoche and Jennifer Cohen in 2009. Our learning programs, coaching practice, organizational consulting engagements and groundbreaking thought leadership work are all designed to help bring about a world that is loving, courageous and just. We pursue this vision primarily by shifting the paradigm from one of scarcity to one of Sustainable Abundance® in the individuals, organizations and communities with whom we work.

