

The Infidelity Recovery Institute

TRUST

Trust is not formed when times are easy – it is during great stress and uncertainty that your ongoing commitment to your partner creates mutual trust.

THE FIVE STAGES OF BUILDING TRUST

Trust is depleted when partners lose their commitment to each other, let go of the other's needs, and put their own individual needs first. In the same way, trust can be rebuilt by proving your commitment to your partner over time and during periods of tests. Since trust is built by testing it, you can accelerate trust in your relationship by following the five stages of building trust in difficult circumstances.



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THE ART OF BUILDING AND REBUILDING TRUST

The challenge is that trust is formed not during easy times, but in defining moments of difficulty and stress, when our loyalties, our priorities, and our commitment come into question. That is why creating trust is about how to face our deepest fears, tap into our inner strength, and bring to our partners what they need most. When you can build trust in times of difficulty and stress, the relationship will grow and flourish. When during those moments you fail to increase your trust, you will have difficulty making progress in many areas of your relationship.

The principle behind trust is quite simple. We trust people when we feel they care about what we need. Trust is built at those moments when the pressure is such that you are tempted to put yourself first and put your partner's needs second. That is precisely the time to take the opportunity to put your partner first and so create a strong bond of trust and love.

Trust is based on mutual high standards about meeting each other's needs. When you and your partner are confidently and firmly devoted to a level three relationship, all heck can break loose yet you know that you won't get left behind. If your mutual standards are level two, then you know you can trust your partner as far as their needs are being met. At some point, however, your partner may say, "Look, this is unreasonable. I have to meet this need, and you must be responsible for your needs as well." At that point the relationship has dropped to a level one, where in an environment of scarcity, the two partners end up competing for whose needs get met and who is going to go without. Sound familiar? Ever heard of any divorces that took this route? Most of us have.

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- 1** STAGE ONE: COMMIT AND DECLARE. The basis of trust is your commitment to put your partner's needs first. You cannot build trust when you are focusing on yourself and putting yourself first. You cannot say that you will create trust once you've gotten what you want. You must start by declaring your absolute commitment to your partner. For instance, you can say: "I love you too much to argue with you." "I love you and I will take care of you no matter what."
- 2** STAGE TWO: CREATE HEARTFELT EMOTION that will bring healing and love. Breathe deeply, put your hand on your heart, look into your partner's eyes and express your love. Go back into yourself, close your eyes, breathe deeply. Connect from your heart to his or her heart. Feel the love that binds you. Stay in your heart until all negative emotions are outweighed by your gratitude and love. Do not proceed to stage three until you have heartfelt emotion for your partner.
- 3** STAGE THREE: SHARE, LISTEN, LEARN. Tell the truth about your feelings and listen to your partner without trying to fix or resolve anything. Your partner may express doubt, hesitation, regret or disappointment. When this happens, show your loving determination to put your partner first and to honor his or her need for love. Don't see your partner's feedback as an attack—see it as a request for more love from you. Whatever your partner says, give him or her a loving response.

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STAGE FOUR: ALIGN AND CREATE VISION. Align with your partner and create a compelling future. Hear your partner's requests, learn about your partner's needs, and think of ways to meet these underlying needs. Give him or her a loving response. Repeat your declaration of love and commitment. Think of ways to create a common vision of the future, combining your needs and your partner's needs.

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STAGE FIVE: ACT OF LOVE. Always end difficult conversations with an act of love: a kiss, a hug, a reference to a happy memory, a promise. If you cannot end with an act of love, then you have not succeeded in building trust. Go back to stages one through four. Remember, trust is either won or lost, there is no third option.

Trust is built by repeating and reinforcing these five levels: from commitment, to generating loving emotions, to sharing and listening, to giving a loving response, to aligning for a compelling future, to acts of love. The next time you find yourself in a difficult conversation with your partner, take a moment to understand which stage the conversation is at. Is your partner feeling your love, understanding, and commitment? Do you have heartfelt emotion towards your partner? Is it safe for your partner to share his or her experience, while you listen? Are you capable of giving a loving response, no matter what your partner's emotional state is? Once you and your partner have shared and communicated, align and create a shared vision, so that when you are back together, the exercise is sealed by an act of love.

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Presence Exercise for Men:

Look into her eyes. Go to what she's thinking about. Share her emotions. Go to her feelings even if they are negative and opposing you. Don't try to change her, just be with her. While staying physically solid and still, imagine going into her body and feel what she's feeling, experience what she's experiencing. Use any clues to figure out how she's feeling, without judgment or distraction. Don't posture or position, don't worry about what you look like. Just focus your total attention on feeling and understanding her.

REALITY CHECK: Presence doesn't necessarily mean staring silently into your partner. You must know how your partner communicates. If he or she is biased towards auditory communication, communicate your commitment verbally. If they are visual, present visually to him or her, watching for their response. If your partner is touch-based, your job is easy—caress and hold.

Heart Exercise for Women:

Go to your heart and let it open to him. Feel his full presence. If he seems distracted, scared or stuck in thought, give him a slap on the shoulder. The purpose is not to hurt him but to give him direct feedback, to help him to be fully engaged, bring him to full attention. Slap him to wake him up, give him the feedback he needs. Help him to be present for you. This is the greatest gift you can give him. When you feel his full presence reward him with a hug and a kiss.

REALITY CHECK: Be true to your feelings, but don't hold out either! This is a fine line, and a time to be connected by your heart. If you can feel your partner's earnest effort, his confidence, and his devotion, encourage him.

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Exercise

This exercise focuses on a critical element on restoring trust during times of conflict – creating a heart felt understanding. This breathing exercise will put you in your natural emotional center, where heartfelt understanding is effortless. You can make more heartfelt and integrated decisions for your life and your relationship.

1. Think of something that has been upsetting you. Something that bothers you enough to make a physiological impact on you.
2. Breathe into your heart, feel its power and intelligence. Don't think—return your attention to your heart—for 2 minutes.
3. When finished, ask your heart what you need to know. Accept the first answer.
4. Go to your partner, give them something, and make a commitment to them.