



Affective Center for Therapy

2560 W. Shaw, Suite 105, Fresno, CA 93711

559.436-0428 Fax: 559.436-0438

Trust vs. Acceptance

“I cannot trust you.” Trust is **your belief** (sometimes irrational) that a person or thing will perform or act as advertised or as promised. Is it possible to have a good relationship without trust?

My observation is that people and things are going to do what they are going to do, not what I think or believe that they should do. Putting your trust in someone or something means putting your power outside of yourself. When you trust someone, you no longer have control. They may or may not live up to your expectations.

Who says that anything or anybody should live up to your expectations? A few years ago, I had a couple come in for counseling. At that time, I offered to record their sessions for them so they could listen at a later time, if they would bring in a cassette tape.

Both felt that this was a wonderful idea. She said that she would be sure to bring a cassette tape to the next session. At the next session, she said that she had forgotten the tape but that she would be sure to bring it the next session. On the third session, she again forgot to bring the tape and reassured him, once again, that she would bring in a tape to record the session. By the seventh session, she had again forgotten to bring the tape. He was really upset and angry at her, “You keep telling me you are going to bring in the tape but you never do! What is the matter with you?” My response to him was, “And, who is the fool that believes her?”

Now, let us look at the other side. Can you always be trusted to do what you say you are going to do? Have there been times in your life where you have not lived up to your own expectations? If you cannot be trusted, how can you expect others to be trustworthy?

The real problem with trust begins with the judgments that you attach to your missed expectations. So, what does it mean when something or somebody does not live up to your expectations? What does it mean if you do not even live up to your own expectations?

Are you aware of your judgments when people do not live up to your expectations?

- ✓ I am a failure.
- ✓ She does not love me.
- ✓ I must be garbage.
- ✓ I should never trust anybody again.
- ✓ I need to protect myself from the emotional pain of having my hopes dashed.
- ✓ Most people are liars.

The judgments that I put onto people when they do not live up to my expectations will determine how I feel about them and, how I feel about them will determine my behavior towards them.

- ✓ I must not allow myself to ever get close to people. They will only disappoint me.
- ✓ I need to get a divorce.
- ✓ I need to punish myself for having trusted them in the first place.
- ✓ I need to warn other people about how bad a person I am.
- ✓ I should kill myself ("They will be sorry when I'm gone").
- ✓ I should not trust anybody; I need to do everything myself.

Since, the judgments that you hold were created by you, you could change your judgments on the missed expectations that you experience. If you choose to change your judgments about missed expectations then, you would exhibit a whole different set of behaviors.

- ✓ Now, you could check out to see if there was a misunderstanding about your expectations.
- ✓ Now, you could trust yourself that you do not have to protect yourself from emotional pain.
- ✓ Now, you might choose to **accept** that the other person is just human and that everybody screws up at some point.
- ✓ Now, you could **accept** yourself as just being human. To err is human; to accept is divine.

Acceptance is a difficult concept. To accept yourself does not mean that you approve of your behavior. It just means that you accept, without blaming, putdowns or name-calling, that you did the behavior and that you intend to learn from your mistakes. To accept others is much the same. Yes, they did what they did, and without judgment, blaming, putdowns, name-calling, you simply say, "Isn't it interesting that they seem to be having a difficult time right now."

To be able to accept others means that you must trust yourself to be OK when others do not live up to your expectations. If you can accept yourself and others, then the need to trust becomes a moot question.

LESSONS TO LEARN:

1. Trust is really about trusting yourself to be able to handle any missed expectations.
2. You do not have to trust if you can accept.
3. Acceptance is not about finding a person to trust, it is accepting the person you have found.
4. To accept somebody does not mean you approve of their behavior or that you have to live with them.
5. When people do not live up to your expectations, it says nothing about you.
6. If you find yourself nagging, this is a sign that you do not trust that person.
[One of the problems with nagging is that people become dependent on the nagger and stop trusting themselves.]

Myron Doc Downing PhD, LMFT

DocDowning@att.net

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