

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

How Can You Restore Someone's Trust In You?

from the American Counseling Association

Anyone who has experienced a breach of trust knows the pain and confusion that can go into trying to restore that trust. Any number of circumstances can cause us to lose trust. It can be a fairly minor incident, like a teen being late for a few too many curfews, or a major one, like an infidelity in a relationship. The person who lied feels they can never do enough to be trusted again. The deceived person probably feels it would be foolish to become too accepting too soon.

If you want someone to regain their trust in you, try these tips that can help:

- **Don't make excuses.** Apologize and affirm that you won't behave in the same manner again. Blaming someone else or claiming something happened beyond your control won't help regain trust.

- **Deliver on your promises.** Even in areas that might seem trivial, you can build trust by doing what you say you will do. If you say you'll call if you're going to be late, call. If you say you'll do the laundry, do it. No forgetting, no having to be reminded, no offering excuses.

- **Expect the healing process to take time.** Expect it to take more time than you thought it would, and probably more time than you think your original mistake deserves. The simple truth is that rebuilding trust is a slow process, one that requires repeated demonstrations of you being honest and following through, before trust begins to return.

If you are the person who was deceived, you can help in the rebuilding of trust if you really value your relationship with the other person. You can start by paying attention to the things he or she is doing to try and reestablish your trust in them. Appreciate the effort that's being made, as opposed to the other person just expecting you to "get over it."

Though at first, it may seem as if a broken trust can never be repaired, people have a marvelous ability to make amends. The tough part is holding on through the rebuilding phase while consistency replaces doubt, time reduces discomfort and forgiveness replaces anger. If, despite these efforts, problems with trust and honesty persist in your family, or if anger prevents movement toward forgiveness, a consultation with a professional counselor might help fine-tune your relationships and get you moving toward healthier communication.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

###

words: 397