Can We Talk?

Trust:

The Importance of
Building and
Deepening
Relationships
Within the Family

SPENCER LEGACY GROUP

When trust is not present relationships suffer.

Trust is the act of placing confidence in someone or something else. It is a fundamental human experience, necessary for society to function and for any person to be relatively happy. Without trust, fear rules.

Certain life experiences can impact a person's ability to trust others. Family can often be the people closest to you or the ones that can inflict the deepest emotional wounds. Broken trust within a family can be devastating and hinder the functionality of the family unit.

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So, what are the common signs and symptoms of trust issues? Let us start with the assumption that everyone has uncertainty about whom to trust, how much to trust or when not to trust. It would be common for children to trust their parents, after all they bring children into the world, shelter, feed, bathe and rear them. Every day we each make decisions on questions of trust and at times we are more willing to trust than other times. A total lack of mistrust of everyone would indicate a serious psychological problem, so it is a good thing that we make trust decisions all the time, since our judgments about trust help keep us safe and alive.

Within a family there are signs that there may be excessive mistrust such as:

- A total lack of intimacy or friendship due to mistrust,
- Mistrust that interferes with one's primary relationship, e.g. a spouse,
- Several intensely dramatic and stormy relationships either at the same time or sequentially between siblings, parent child or even spouses,
- Constant thoughts of suspicion or anxiety about family and friends,
- Terror during physical intimacy, and
- A belief that others are deceptive and malevolent without real evidence.

Mistrust can play a significant role within a family and in a person's life, especially if past betrayals or disappointments are at the core of the issue. Parents abandoning children in their moment of need can be devastating with lifetime consequences. Mistrust is valid as a response if one has been abandoned which creates anger or self-doubt.

Trust issues can arise based upon experiences and interactions in childhood, for example if one did not receive adequate nurturing, affection or acceptance. If, as an adolescent one experienced social rejection within a family by being treated as an outcast, or as an adult a loved one was lost, there may be issues with trusting others to feel safe and secure.

Being unable to trust can destroy family relationships, friendships, careers and marriages. Building and deepening relationships is core and trust can be a major obstacle if one does not know how to build trust. Nearly all the reasons why relationships fail is because a lack of loyalty, honest communication and mutuality due to lack or loss of trust.

Fortunately, one can learn to trust again.

So how is trust built and maintained in family relationships? Once broken trust must be rebuilt incrementally. We must demonstrate that we are trustworthy in small things and then build on the newly woven threads of trust to demonstrate our trustworthiness in larger and larger things. This takes time, patience and forgiveness on the part of both parties to the relationship. Whether a family relationship or a romantic relationship, one of the most satisfying and fulfilling connections is trusting the other person. Indeed, positive relationships are critically important to one's own wellbeing, as trust is the cornerstone of all relationships. A constant lack of trust can lead to unhappiness.

There are four critical factors in ensuring trust resides in a relationship:

- **Values-** a common set of values and a willingness to respect those that do not overlap is essential. Shared values contribute to a mutual recognition of priorities that reduces dissension. Respecting the

Critical Factors in Insuring Trust:

1. Values

2. Integrity

3. Mutuality

4. Commitment

other's values provides teachings about one's strengths and virtues.

- **Integrity-** this is comprised of honesty and consistency, so that there is predictability in the relationship.
- **Mutuality**- this refers to working as a family within the relationships and is critical to sustained trust. Mutuality can be viewed as the ability to rely on one another, being on the same side and focused in the same direction.
- **Commitment-**loyalty is important in the relationship so that the relationships efforts are not in vain.

The following are techniques that can be deployed to build trust:

Being honest- perhaps this is the most obvious way to maintain trust since lying, being deceitful or dishonest will tear individual and family relationships apart.

Communicating effectively – this is one of the main reasons for failed relationships. This is an area that one can continually develop through training and practice. Empathetic listening and active constructive communication are important in creating mutual understanding and developing trust.

Controlling impulsive decision making - any relationship will have a hard time when other family members believe they are not a part of important family decisions. Impulsive behaviors need to be tempered by self- control in decision making.

Being reliable - when one does not follow through on one's promises, people assume that if not reliable then one is not honest and communicating openly. Actions must match promises, otherwise it seeds distrust.

Admitting mistakes – making mistakes is unavoidable and failing to meet every expectation is a key part of the human experience since we are not perfect.

Possessing moral integrity and building a reputation on doing what is right will enhance the building of trust.

Admitting our mistakes and taking responsibility for our actions is important. Failing to do so, begs the question of what else might we be concealing or lying about?

Doing the right thing – a strong moral compass can tell us whether our actions are right or wrong. Using a moral compass around values, which is one of the key factors in a mutually strong relationship, will help others to understand, rely on and trust us. Possessing moral integrity and building a reputation on doing what is right will enhance the building of trust.

Avoid self-promotion- relationships are a two-way street so it is important to respect another person in the family. For example, by being grateful for another's presence and the efforts they make to keep the relationship going, rather than talking solely about oneself to feed one's ego.

Express yourself- while revealing feelings may be uncomfortable and make one vulnerable, they are important in building trust. Being authentic rather than concealing true emotions can positively impact a relationship by avoiding secrecy and mitigating resentment.

Working hand in hand with trust is the capacity to express gratitude and empathy. Along with trust, these are foundations on which every authentic relationship and meaningful connection is built. As maintaining positive relationships is a key construct to one's subjective wellbeing, empathy is therefore a key catalyst to help accomplish this.

Trust can ebb or flow over time, so continuing to adjust and commit to a relationship is important to receive back trust, respect and love in return. In summary, trust is core within any family and thus crucial to any lasting family relationship.

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help your family overcome the issues that might sabotage your success. When it's time to talk about the elephant in the room, give us a call at 1-800-694-0059, or find us online at www.spencerlegacygroup.com.

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