

Rebuilding Trust on Teams

Trust is foundational on high-performing, inspired teams. In the Team Diagnostic Assessment™ trust is defined as "It is safe on this team to speak your mind openly. We can count on each other. We are reliable. The team does not operate in a fear-based environment."

When we can't look our teammates directly in the eyes, trust has been broken in some way, shape or form. Each time we talk behind backs, don't do what we say, miss a deadline, gossip, gang up on a leader or team member, blame, stockpile complaints, discount human needs, break a promise, work with unclear expectations, stonewall, lead by fear or micromanage, trust is diminished. With our avoidance, compliance, defensiveness or ignorance, we create and feed an invisible elephant called guilt.

To rebuild connection on a team (and reduce the size of the metaphorical pachyderm) experiment with these ideas:

- Acknowledge trust is lacking and explore the impact it's having on the team.
- Remember what it was like when trust existed or imagine what it would be like (specific behaviors) if trust was strong on the team.
- Go for SMART trust (it's different than blind or suspicious trust).
- Ask, "How did I contribute?" with curiosity instead of blame or judgment.
- Identify needs not being met (safety, integrity, connection, celebration, meaning, autonomy, etc.) then create strategies that meet everyone's needs.
- Forgive yourself for participating. For example, "I'm sorry for my own ignorant behavior and for not fixing this sooner."
- Apologize to the others involved. For example, "I'm sorry for sharing what I was thinking with a team mate and not directly with you. I'm sorry for siding with ___ and not realizing the impact on the team. How do I make it right?"
- Discuss the "story" behind distrust and what is keeping it alive.
- Notice repair bids for connection—light conversation, laughter and asking to help.
- Clarify any new team expectations, roles, protocols, processes or goals.
- Create a team agreement to hold each other accountable for new behaviors.
- Consider the research "If I'm trusting I'm perceived as trust worthy."

For more tips on building trust...

The Speed of Trust by Stephen M. R. Covey www.coveylink.com

5 Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Leoncini www.tablegroup.com

The Relationship Cure by John Gottman www.gottman.com

Non-Violent Communication: The Language of Life by Marshall Rosenberg www.cnvc.org

THE SCOOP, an e-letter from www.brainstormingalamode.com, provides ideas and inspiration to enhance creativity, effectiveness, and positivity at work and on teams.