

The following are two topic sections excerpted from the *Team Trust at Work Facilitator Guide*. They are meant to give you an idea of how the Guide is structured and the content you can expect in it.

10. Defining Trust

Learning Points:

1. Trust is a choice.
2. The choice to trust someone can be revised, revoked, and/or reinstated at any time.
3. The choice to trust is based on a risk assessment.
4. Trusting is directly linked to what a person values.
5. Trusting is about being vulnerable.

Background and Facilitation Tips

💡 ***Trust is choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person's actions.***

💡 **There are three important elements to this definition:**

1. To trust is a choice or decision is based on a risk assessment. The risk assessment typically takes place mostly below the level of conscious awareness and is never a purely linear, logical process. It is based what the person observes, hears from others, past experiences, and feels (their emotional state).
2. You can make the risk assessment process conscious for yourself and others. By doing so you can begin to see specifically why you trust or distrust particular individuals, and why they may or may not trust you. Understanding this makes it much easier to build trust and repair it when needed.
3. What is potentially at risk when you trust someone is something you value.

💡 ***What people value and decide they can risk making vulnerable to another person's action - or not - can vary considerably. Some common workplace examples are:***

- A promotion or pay increase – “I trust my boss will give me fair consideration.”
- An important goal or project outcome – “I trust the other people on this team can and will help us achieve the results we need.”
- One's reputation – “I trust she will come through for me. My reputation is at stake on this one.”
- A particular way of doing something – “I trust he can do this the way I want him to.”
- One's sense of well being – “I trust these people care about and support me.”
- One's job – “I trust my manager will do the right thing.”
- One's dreams – “I trust he will support my career dream.”

We are never so vulnerable than when we trust someone – but paradoxically, if we cannot trust neither can we find love or joy. – Walter Anderson, founding editor in chief of Parade Magazine.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What does this definition bring up for you?
2. What does vulnerability have to do with trust?
3. How do you judge the risk to trust someone?

11. Exercise: What We Value

Intended Outcomes:

- People in the team/group reflect on and share with each other some of the things they value enough in their work life to be concerned about entrusting to others
- They have an opportunity to reflect on and share *why* they trust the people they trust
- They spend some time thinking about what others might value and entrust to them
- They take the next step and consider why they think others trust them

Process

The starting place for this exercise is “*someone at work whom you trust*”, not “someone in this team/group”. If the climate in the organization as a whole leans toward distrust you may want to allow people to cast an even wide net, e.g., “someone in your life whom you trust”.

Recommendation: Tell people **not** to share the names of the people they trust.

This exercise is **not** intended to lead to a conversation in which people share “why I trust you”. This will come later after more preparation.

Overall time for exercise: 30 min. max.

Instructions to participants:

1. Get into groups of 2 or 3 people.
2. Think of someone at work whom you trust.
3. Answer to yourself the following questions (4 min.):
 - a. What do you entrust to them that you value?
 - b. Why do you trust them with this?
 - c. What do others at work value that they trust you with?
 - d. Why do you think they trust you with what they value?
4. Share your answers with the others in your group (3 min./person, 7-10 min. total)
5. Whole group debrief (15 min.)

Suggested Debrief Questions:

- Did anything surprise you as you did this exercise?
 - What did you learn or realize about yourself?
 - What were the themes, if any, around why you trust the people you trust?
 - What were the themes, if any, around why others trust you?
 - What did you learn about others on the team that you didn't realize before?
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