

Building Higher Trust 97 Trust Fragments

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



In this article, I will focus on the pile of trust fragments that remain after trust has been shattered. The process of rebuilding trust starts with examining the fragments of broken trust.

I like to use visual analogies when describing my beliefs about trust. For example, I built a Rube Goldberg-like device that I call my Trust Barometer. I use it to describe how trust is often built in small increments over time. The device also shows how all the built-up trust can be destroyed very quickly. Here is a brief video of me demonstrating [“The Trust Barometer.”](#)

What are Trust Fragments?

Think of the relationship you have with another person. It is not a simple thing. It consists of many interrelated parts held together by a magical force called trust. I picture it like a beautiful glass ball filled with experiences and feelings about the other person.

When a trust betrayal occurs, the glass ball becomes shattered, and the pieces all fall to the ground. Those pieces are the trust fragments that form the basis of rebuilding trust.

How to pick up the fragments

Some of the trust fragments will be distorted or lost in the process of the breakup. Still, there will be plenty of fragments that are intact and useful. Set aside the temptation to focus on the catastrophe that caused the ball to explode. Instead, start looking at the pieces you recognize. They will be all over the place and not in good order.

Start looking at the parts you can recognize. For example, look at the happy memories that were from the time before the explosion. Recall as many of the good feelings about the other person as you can. Fixate on what it was about these times that provided value to the relationship. Many of these things are still in place and just need to be put back together like a jigsaw puzzle.

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Get some glue

As you put some pieces in place, make sure to glue them together so they start forming a picture. I think the glue can take the form of a heart-to-heart discussion between yourself and the other party. What are the parts of the glue? One is the desire of both parties to return to at least a strong relationship as you had before. By verbalizing this desire, you go a long way toward the repair. Another part is demonstrating your care for the other person and the relationship.

Ask what will make the repair complete

If you both have expressed a desire to repair the damage, you are halfway home. Ask the other party what would have to occur to mend the damage completely. Ask if there might be a way to make the relationship stronger than it ever was before. Those questions will get the endorphins flowing and add enthusiasm to the work.

Verify progress along the way

Complete repair is not going to happen in an hour or a day. Expect the process to be delicate and challenging but worth the effort. It is important to celebrate when the fragments are back together for part of the puzzle. Feel good about this progress. It will give you the energy to continue.

Conclusion

Picking up and repairing the fragments of lost trust is not a simple process. It will be rewarding and very valuable if you take the steps outlined above. The process can be repeated anytime there is a serious breach of trust.

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