

Building Higher Trust 128 Trust and Vulnerability

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Think about the relationship between the principles of trust and vulnerability. The two concepts are not the same, but they are interrelated in numerous ways. This article will describe some of the most common relationships between trust and vulnerability.

Defining trust and vulnerability

As soon as we try to define trust, the concept of vulnerability surfaces as part of the thinking process. Vulnerability refers to the state of being exposed or susceptible to harm, emotionally or physically

Charles Feltman gave the best definition of trust I have seen in his book, *The Thin Book of Trust*. Charles embeds the concept of vulnerability into his definition of trust. He posits that trust is “choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person’s actions.”

Trust implies vulnerability

When we trust someone, we make ourselves vulnerable to them. Trust requires us to let our guard down. We reveal our thoughts and rely on the other person to respect and handle that vulnerability with care. In a trusting relationship, individuals feel safe enough to share their true selves. They express their needs and desires and take emotional risks without fear of judgment, betrayal, or exploitation.

However, the act of being vulnerable also opens us up to the potential for harm or disappointment. When we trust someone, we are essentially placing a part of our well-being in their hands. If that trust is violated, it can lead to emotional pain, betrayal, and a loss of security.

The concepts go hand in hand

Trust and vulnerability go hand in hand. The more vulnerable we allow ourselves to be, the more trust is required. Also, the more trust we place in someone, the more vulnerable we become.

The process of verification requires time

Building trust in relationships often involves a gradual process of testing and evaluating the other person's trustworthiness over time. It requires consistent demonstration of reliability, honesty, and respect. As trust is established and confirmed, we feel more comfortable being vulnerable with each other.

Conversely, a lack of trust can hinder vulnerability. If individuals do not feel safe or secure in a relationship, they may be hesitant to be vulnerable. They fear that their vulnerability will be exploited or used against them. In such cases, the absence of trust can create barriers to open communication, emotional intimacy, and personal growth.

Summary

Trust and vulnerability are interconnected. Trust enables individuals to open themselves up and be vulnerable. Vulnerability necessitates trust in order to feel safe and secure. Both elements are essential for building healthy, meaningful relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

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