

# SIX WAYS TO REBUILD TRUST... AFTER A BETRAYAL



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*eBook Series – Barbara J. Peters*



Trust is one of the FACTS written about in my first book, *The Gift of Lifetime - Building A Marriage That Lasts*. It is a feeling of being able to give up vulnerabilities and be safe with another person. It means knowing there is a boundary around your relationship in which the parameters are fully understood.

These mutually agreed upon parameters create a foundation of safety and dependability. It is an environment of open and honest communication without fear of rejection.

Trust is based on choices and promises that you make to each other. Other FACTS include Forgiveness, Acceptance, Compassion, and Spirituality. FACTS are the ingredients that ward off divorce.

Trust is an essential component of a strong relationship. Without trust, chances of survival for the long haul are limited, if not nonexistent. Once trust is broken, it's hard to rebuild. Some people claim that they are not able to trust ever again, and some want the chance to rebuild trust. It is for the latter group of people that I am writing this new eBook.

Trust can be broken in many ways. Here are a few.

1. Going back on your word or breaking promises.
2. Not being there for your partner in a time of need.
3. Withholding important information or keeping destructive secrets.
4. Lying or manipulation.
5. A pattern of not sharing feelings openly.
6. Romantic or sexual infidelity.

No matter what the betrayal, the choice to rebuild a relationship is an individual one. If you want to attempt to repair an intimate bond you have lost, the strategy you adopt may be affected by what sort of betrayal you experienced.

Your choices may be different if the betrayal was a lie or a broken promise instead of a violation of a marital vow of monogamy. But one thing any reconciliation has in common is the decision to forgive and continue the relationship. That is the bottom line.

Symptoms of betrayal may range from hurt to shock and even physical illness. It certainly causes you to see your partner in a different light. If one or both of you have been “faking it,” not prioritizing, or pretending to want things you don’t (or trying to be someone you are not), repairing a broken relationship will require becoming more honest with each other.

The following are some good starting points for an attempt to rebuild a damaged relationship.

# COMMUNICATE



1. Communicate and talk about the situation that caused the betrayal. Set some time (on an as-needed basis) to just ask questions and find out why things went in this direction. Tell your significant other what hurt you most and how it makes you feel today.

Most important is for you to tell him or her what you need to begin to trust again. Be specific. If you don't know what would help, leave the door open to get back to the topic when you know what you want. Give the other person a chance to respond and be mindful of sincerity. Does your partner apologize and show remorse for the actions, or rather sound resentful or defensive? Is your partner taking responsibility, or rather trying to deny any wrongdoing?

Communication may be difficult at first. There are bound to be emotional reactions to the information disclosed. Decide how much you want to know and take time to process what you learn. Nothing is gained from continuing a disturbing conversation if emotions are escalating and nothing constructive is happening. Agree to talk again.

## PRACTICE FORGIVENESS



2. Forgiveness is a conscious decision to let the past go, move on, and focus on the positive events in the here-and-now. It does not mean accepting the hurt or injury that someone else's actions inflicted upon you. It does not mean condoning that behavior. It means moving on in spite of it.

Forgiveness means to realize people make mistakes and can be given a chance to do better. It releases you from negative thoughts and lets you choose happiness over misery. It does not demand punishment or restitution.

Be mindful of who you need to forgive. If you try to blame yourself for a poor choice your significant other made, you will remain stuck in self-doubt. Better to find a way to come to terms with what happened, leave it in the past, and give your partner a chance to learn and do better.

It will most likely be difficult to forgive the behavior, but regaining trust depends on doing things differently. Forgiveness is a process, and the first step is making the decision to forgive. *Decisional forgiveness* allows you to move on without pardoning the hurtful behavior.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE



3. Once you feel you have discussed the betrayal to exhaustion, put it on the back burner. Bringing it up time and time again can only serve to keep your wounds fresh.

To move on, focus on creating a new relationship grounded in strong values and commitment. Reminding each other of negative patterns doesn't leave room for positive behaviors to grow.

If you have misgivings about your partner's faithfulness (or his or her ability to change), and if you are finding it difficult to stop thinking about the past, you might benefit from counseling.

There are no benefits from repetitive, bitter discussions about the event. In fact, that is a sure way to sabotage any hope to rebuild trust.



## CREATE A VISION FOR A NEW RELATIONSHIP



4. Do some soul searching and gentle questioning. Look at what you want and need in a mate and be specific with those thoughts. Ask for what you need, and don't expect your partner to have all the answers.

Find out what he or she needs and wants. Make a vision board of those criteria and explore the feasibility of attaining them. Be clear in your goals, using only positive language.

Stay away from "problem talk." Be open to self-growth and improvement. If possible, identify the underlying causes of the betrayal and seek to understand them.

Words need to become actions, not just promises or statements.



## ALLOW FOR TIME



5. The best is yet to come, but be patient. Time is needed to let the new relationship thrive. Letting go of the old ways and embracing new ones is challenging, for sure.

People process things in their own way. It is important to have the time you need to accept an apology and see the new behavior take place. It may be days or even weeks before you are ready to love again and trust.

One question I have heard frequently in my practice is, “How do I know it will not happen again?” The answer is simple: You don’t. All you have is one day at a time.

What you see and what your partner does will show you if improvement is a reality.





## PRIORITIZE YOUR RELATIONSHIP



### 6. Prioritize your relationship by giving it the attention it requires.

Make a realistic trust contract and follow it daily. In this contract, there is a list of behaviors that each person agrees never to do again, such as adultery. There may be items on the list about what behaviors are wanted, such as honesty.

The contract can be written and agreed on by the couple, perhaps with help from a mediator. Decide to take this seriously even when it gets difficult. Don't let the good behavior be followed by thoughts of the betrayal. Remind yourself that people make poor choices.

Give yourself permission to be accepting and open to a new beginning. I once heard that from every ending comes a new beginning. If this is your desire, then go for it.



## SUMMARY



Now, of course, this path is not for everybody. Nor does it fit every conflict. Some relationship breaches cannot be repaired. But it never hurts to think about what happened and what you are choosing to do next. This introspection might keep you from repeating the same patterns in the future.

If it is not in your makeup to forgive and move on with someone who has betrayed you, ask yourself why, and find the next-best option. Rebuilding trust is difficult and often cannot be done.

Is your marriage or committed relationship deserving of a chance? Is the betrayal something you can live with, or is it something that will bother you daily? Only you can make that choice.



## ONE LAST WORD



Although this eBook addresses the betrayed person, we cannot leave this topic without mentioning the person who was the perpetrator and was the initiator of the betrayal. This person has his or her own recovery to figure out.

Betrayers may ask themselves “why” they did it. They may need to look deeper and see if they were looking to get out of the relationship. They may wonder if they are repeating a family history of a parent.

Many questions can be posed. An important piece of their behavior is, do they truly regret it? Or perhaps, are they overwhelmed by guilt and remorse? For example, a wife might forgive her husband for an affair, but he can’t forgive himself for damaging their relationship.

It is up to him or her to ask for forgiveness and to offer new behavior.



## FROM BARBARA



My hope is that this short eBook will give you some tools to create a new and honest relationship in the future.

I have written two popular books on having great relationships [The Gift Of A Lifetime - Building A Marriage That Lasts](#) and one on saving relationships [He Said, She Said, I Said](#).

I enjoyed writing them so much and know they have helped many couples over the years, and they may be of further help to you also.

I also write regular blog posts on my website [BarbaraJPeters.com](#) with most topics on common relationship problems and how to resolve them, so please check them out too.

I wish you all the best,  
Barbara J. Peters

