

Trust Still: A Self-Reflection Tool

Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard and valued, when they can give and receive without judgement. (Brene Brown, Ph.D., LMSW)

Trust is not a tangible – yet it can be measured. It is more than a feeling – it is an energy that allows a person, partners, or organization to take the risks to engage fully without fear. This activity is titled, ‘*Trust Still*’ because it supports the knowledge, skills, skills, dispositions, and behaviors to get through the times when our expectations for ourselves, others, and the groups we are participating in are not satisfied. We can make a commitment to continue to trust ourselves, others, and our groups; and continue to work through the challenges and find new approaches to realize our goals.

The purpose of this learning activity is for participants to reflect on their own level of trust within an interaction, to see trust on a continuum and to determine what can be done to increase the level of trust. It can be used individually or as a group and can be revisited over time.

We all begin new interactions with our own experiences, expectations, and beliefs. Before entering a new interaction, consider the following *Guiding Questions for Self-reflection*:

- What is the common purpose for coming together?
- What value do I hope to gain because of my participation?
- How would I assess my understanding of content related to the topic?
- How might my prior experiences impact my participation?
- Consider culture. How might others within the interaction have a perspective different than mine?
- How might external pressures such as predetermined timelines or outcomes impact our work together?
- Are we working together voluntarily?



Like a temperature gauge, trust can fluctuate depending upon many variables. Groups have their ups and downs and are in a constant state of evolution, yet every participant has a mutual responsibility to work towards the highest level of trust.

Considering context, place a check beside the areas that best represents the interaction you are involved with. Then check the level of trust for each row within the table below.

- Two-person interaction
- Small group interaction
- Large group interaction

- Group leader
- Group participant

<i>Low Level of Trust</i>	<i>Moderate Level of Trust</i>	<i>High Level of Trust</i>
Experiences		
<input type="checkbox"/> Have had prior negative experiences that support claims and feelings of distrust and suspicions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Have had both prior positive and negative experiences that support claims and feelings of hesitation to trust.	<input type="checkbox"/> Have had many positive experiences that support claims and feelings of a high level of trust and confidence.
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a high level of distrust and suspicions even when a negative	<input type="checkbox"/> Remain cautious and hesitant even when experience appears to be positive.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a high level of trust even when there are negative experiences, challenges and conflicts.

experience is replaced by a positive experience.		
Dispositions, Attitudes and Beliefs		
<input type="checkbox"/> Suspicious and often unsure that those involved are acting with positive intentions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Presume good intentions but hesitant to be fully involved in case others do not fulfill their expectations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presume good intentions even when challenged with opposing opinions and ideas that cause concern and may not support deeply held beliefs or values.
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not trust the motives of others. May think there is a hidden motive or a hidden agenda; that decisions will be made based on power or position rather than merit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understand that trusting doesn't mean turning over power or opportunity to influence decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Even when there is a disagreement with another person's perspective, willing to reflect and believe that there is merit in their point of view regardless of power or position.
<input type="checkbox"/> Fearful of change or rejection.	<input type="checkbox"/> Open to change.	<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome change as an opportunity for growth.
Actions		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not listen or take time to process and value ideas of others.	<input type="checkbox"/> Listen and take time to process and value ideas and opinions of others but hesitant to respond.	<input type="checkbox"/> Actively listen and encourage others to share their ideas and opinions.
<input type="checkbox"/> Ignore factors related to culture and diversity within a group.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to cultural differences within the group.	<input type="checkbox"/> Actively demonstrate a respect for cultural diversity through the

		inclusion of varying perspectives.
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions that show a lack of trust of others or systems, and not fully open to consider opposing views.	<input type="checkbox"/> Willing to find a common purpose with others but doing so without a strong commitment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Actively interested and encourage others to explain, challenge, or provide opposing views. Willing to change a position.
<input type="checkbox"/> Believe conflict is harmful and not productive.	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid conflict with others out of concern that it will damage the relationship.	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize conflict as a way to grow.
<input type="checkbox"/> Concerned about possible retaliation and judgement if honest with beliefs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cautious; trust until someone breaks an agreed upon social norm.	<input type="checkbox"/> Willing to take risks to be fully involved. Share ideas without fear of retaliation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree or challenge ideas of others as a barrier to open conversations. May be overly judgmental and critical.	<input type="checkbox"/> Will wait to be engaged; want others to prove themselves first.	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue to fully engage and support the consensus process to move forward even if not fully convinced on all points.
<input type="checkbox"/> Unwilling to take the time to think over the issue or engage with others.	<input type="checkbox"/> Willing to extend trust when common connections are made.	<input type="checkbox"/> Willing to take time to reflect, think over the issue and fully consider the input from others before making a decision.
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not see the value in other perspectives.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand that conflicting opinions can result from the same intent and goal but unsure of outcome.	<input type="checkbox"/> Differences are met with a positive tone. Validate someone's position even when don't personally share this belief or perspective.

<input type="checkbox"/> Relations may be cordial but often do not reflect true feelings of reluctance to participate.	<input type="checkbox"/> Present but often hesitant to actively engage and take risks to share ideas and opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative, comfortable and confident in taking the risks to fully engage and actively participate.
Outcomes		
<input type="checkbox"/> Afraid to risk the consequences of participation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize the benefits of the involvement.	<input type="checkbox"/> See the value of getting on board to sustain the work.
<input type="checkbox"/> Not engaged in the work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cautiously engaged with the realization that one can trust others without having to agree.	<input type="checkbox"/> Very engaged and committed to the process of working together.
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication is limited to one way.	<input type="checkbox"/> Two-way communication emerges.	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication flows easily among participants.
<input type="checkbox"/> There is little hope that the interaction will result in a change.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is a commitment to tasks completion, but sustainability is uncertain.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is hope and expectation that work will be sustained over time.

How would you summarize the level of trust within this interaction?

Date of reflection:

Follow-up date:

Advancing Trust: A Self-reflection

Trust is dynamic, an ingredient or catalyst that can energize a group. If we can learn how to build trusting relationships, we can become more effective, efficient, productive, and more satisfied with our work.

Reflect on the previous table outlining levels of trust. Within the context of your work, what actions could you take to advance the level of trust within an interaction? Consider the questions below and develop some actions resulting from the self-reflection.

Self-Reflection Question	Possible Action(s)
How could I acknowledge the experiences of others as a way to develop trust?	
How could I be sure that I am respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of others?	
How could I respond when challenged with opposing opinions and ideas that may not support my deeply held beliefs or values?	
How could I actively welcome, respect and encourage others to share their ideas and opinions?	

In what ways could I demonstrate that I am fully engaged and support the consensus process to move forward even if not fully convinced on all points?	
How could I validate someone's position even when they don't personally share my beliefs or perspective?	
What could I do to feel comfortable and confident in taking the risks needed to fully engage and actively participate?	
Other questions you may have...	