

*Seven Steps to Renew Confidence,
Commitment, and Energy*

REBUILDING TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE

A series of dark, irregularly shaped stepping stones are arranged in a line, crossing a body of blue water. The stones vary in size and texture, some appearing smoother and others more jagged. The water is calm, and the background is a clear blue sky.

DENNIS REINA & MICHELLE REINA

An Excerpt From

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Seven Steps to Renew Confidence, Commitment, and Energy***

by Dennis & Michelle Reina
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REBUILDING TRUST IN THE *WORKPLACE*

INTRODUCTION

Betrayal Is Universal

The vulnerability of trust is always present, even in high-trust relationships. Since business is transacted through relationships, it follows that you will experience times at work when trust is broken—sometimes obviously, and sometimes not so obviously. Each and every day, small but hurtful situations accumulate over time into confidence-busting, commitment-breaking, energy-draining patterns consistent with broken trust. People feel hurt, disappointed, let down, and frustrated. The feelings can be as strong as resentment, bitterness, antipathy, and even betrayal.

Betrayal is not our word. It is the word used by the thousands of people we have worked with who have taught us about trust. Betrayal is often viewed as a dark, negative word that triggers painful memories. But when trust has been broken, people often feel betrayed. That

Every single one of us has been betrayed and has betrayed others.

is the simple truth. It is also true that every single one of us has been betrayed and has betrayed others. Betrayal is universal. People have been betrayed by bosses, subordinates,

co-workers. There is betrayal in families, friendships, neighborhoods, social groups, religious institutions, schools, and universities. The ways trust is broken aren't always immediate or obvious. Let's start by learning more about the forms betrayal takes.

Betrayal			
A breach of trust or the perception of a breach			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minor to major ■ Unintentional or intentional 			
			
MINOR (Examples)		MAJOR (Examples)	
Unintentional	Intentional	Unintentional	Intentional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Repeatedly arriving late for work ■ Not keeping agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gossiping, backbiting ■ Accepting credit for another's work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Restructuring resulting in layoffs ■ Delegating without giving authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Disclosing proprietary information ■ Sabotaging data systems

The Betrayal Continuum

Betrayal occurs on a continuum from unintentional to intentional and from minor to major. Intentional betrayal is a self-serving action committed with the purpose of hurting, damaging, or harming another person. Unintentional betrayal is the by-product of a self-serving or careless action that has the same result.

Major betrayals impact you immediately and dramatically at your deepest core. At work, major betrayal is often associated with mismanaged change related to reorganizations, shifts in strategy, mergers, acquisitions, and layoffs. On a more interpersonal level, a major betrayal may occur through a single act, such as violating a confidence or telling a lie. Major intentional betrayals are often the outcomes of fear and self-serving interests and include situations in which people:

- Deliberately fail to honor their commitments
- Knowingly withhold information
- Deceive fellow co-workers
- Sabotage others' work to further their own ends

Major intentional betrayals are hurtful, ill-intended words or actions that break down trusting relationships. As one concerned

Common Workplace Minor Betrayals

- Gossiping or talking about others behind their backs
- Consistently arriving late for meetings
- Not responding to requests made by others
- Hoarding pertinent, job-related information
- Not returning phone calls or answering email requests
- Finger pointing and blaming
- Covering up mistakes
- Discourteous, insensitive, or rude behavior
- Taking credit for others' work

Many unintentional minor betrayals have to do with abdicating responsibility. These are subtle situations in which someone tries to let him or herself off the hook by:

- Telling a white lie
- Not fully disclosing information
- Condoning or not responding to someone else's inappropriate behavior
- Not owning his or her part of problem
- Allowing his or her co-workers or reports to fail when he or she could have stepped in and helped.

employee told us, “It is especially painful when you are stabbed in the back without warning by those closest to you. It knocks you off your feet.”

While major betrayals decisively break trust, minor unintentional betrayals that erode trust over time are more pervasive. Take a look at the box for examples of such common behaviors. Our research shows that 90 percent of employees experience these types of betrayal frequently. But instead of dealing directly with these transgressions, people let them go unaddressed. Importantly, however, they do not go unnoticed. The net result of the accumulation of minor betrayals is major: people mentally and emotionally check out. They may wait it

out until the economy improves to walk out the door. In the meantime, they become the “working wounded,” those who do as little as they can to get away with, no more, no less. Relationships fall apart and everyone loses.

How you position an experience along the betrayal continuum depends on the degree to which you perceive that the individual was self-serving or careless and the degree of hurt, damage, or pain actually inflicted. For instance, someone accepting credit for someone else’s work may be a minor intentional betrayal in one circumstance, but if the person who falsely accepts credit does so knowing that he will gain greatly at the other’s expense, it is a major intentional betrayal. We recently worked with a leader who lost a promotional opportunity because a co-worker took full credit for her work. This lost opportunity represented a major betrayal.

» **Trust Tip** *In order to fully understand trust, we must understand betrayal. Betrayal is a natural part of human relationships. Critical to the health of human relationships is how effectively we deal with and work through betrayal when it happens.*

The Impact of Betrayal

No matter its source, betrayal can rock you to your core and strike at the very center of your humanness. When you are vulnerable, your feelings are raw. You may feel sick to your stomach, have frequent headaches, or be more susceptible to illness. You may feel broken. You lose your footing, withdraw, pull back, disengage, and contract. In your contraction, you become hesitant and reluctant to trust others and yourself. You doubt yourself, question your own trustworthiness, and contemplate your sense of belonging. You wonder, who can I trust, who can’t I trust? Who can I believe, who can’t I believe? Your sense of self and identity flounders. You ask, what did I do to deserve this, who am I, and what do I have to offer?

In short, when you feel betrayed, you lose the *confidence, commitment, and energy* that keep relationships together, fuel your performance, and feed your satisfaction at work. Let's take these one at a time:

Confidence:

*“A co-worker is always speaking over me in discussions or when we make group presentations. I try to contribute but I struggle to make myself heard. I hold back my opinions because I feel like my co-workers place no value in what I have to say. **I feel insecure and lack confidence in my opinions and my value to the company.**”*

When someone has betrayed you, you lose confidence in that person. If you feel betrayed by your company, you lose confidence in your leadership and sometimes in your colleagues. Over time, with repeated occurrences, you lose confidence in yourself. You begin to question and doubt your competence and your judgment of others. You then are no longer willing to take risks or put in extra effort.

Commitment

*“Everyone on our team is constantly forwarding their own interests and pushing hidden agendas. I guess it's probably not the best way to work, but experience has taught me that this is the only way to get what I want. If I stop looking out for myself, someone around me will take advantage of it, and I won't be able to obtain the resources I need to do my work. I'm sorry, but at this point, I have to focus on looking out for myself, because no one else will. **I feel alienated, isolated, and forced to act in a manner against my core values.**”*

When someone betrays you, you question your commitment to that relationship. When that relationship is at work, the lack of commitment seeps into your commitment to your team, organization, and career. You simply don't care anymore about the organization's mission, your team's goals, or maybe even about your customers or other constituents you serve. You're ready to leave whenever you get a better

offer. You may even be aware of losing connection and commitment to your own values; in other words, you begin to betray *yourself* as well.

Energy

*“Every time I write something, my boss completely rewrites it. I don’t understand why he even has me write it in the first place. At this point, I don’t even make an effort when drafting up a document, because I know he’s going to change the entire thing anyway. It is the most annoying behavior I have ever experienced in the workplace, but there is nothing I can do about it because he’s my boss. **I feel devalued and unable to make meaningful contribution. I’m just going through the motions and am so tired when I get home.**”*

Betrayal is energy-depleting and trust is energy-producing. Trust begets trust, and betrayal begets betrayal. When you feel betrayed, it’s natural to want to betray the other person back. Betrayal is energy-depleting because you spend what energy you do have plotting negative moves or retreating into a survival mode focused on self-preservation. You become distracted from your job and distanced from your colleagues. You lose sight of what used to motivate you, so work becomes a chore that wears you down.

Betrays large and small heighten your awareness of trust-related issues and bring you an opportunity for self-discovery and renewal. Pursuing that opportunity is a choice you make consciously. You can choose to remain depleted, without confidence, commitment, or energy or you can choose to renew by being curious and open to learning, growing, and becoming self-aware.

Betrayal: A Gift and a Teacher

“Every failure, obstacle, or hardship is an opportunity in disguise. Success in many cases is failure turned inside out.”

—Mary Kay Ash
American businessperson

We know it's hard to choose the path of renewal. When you have been betrayed, you often feel helpless and hopeless. You experience doubt and confusion, question your self-worth and your sense of belonging, and are in pain. You may feel as though you have no control over what was "done to you."

When you remain angry, bitter, or resentful and assume the posture of a victim, you lock into a focus on others' actions. You become consumed in what "they did to you," and allow their actions to eat away at your spirit. Over time your resentment grows and self-pity sets in. You may even choose to betray intentionally in return because "they deserve it." Others experience you as arrogant, self-serving, and irresponsible. You are not a person others want to be around or work with.

Alternatively, you may choose to embrace the pain of betrayal. This choice takes you on a journey of healing and renewal. On this journey, you replace anger and bitterness with compassion. Through compassion, you seek to understand your pain and to work through it to heal and to deepen your understanding of your relationships with yourself and with others. You extend the benefit of the doubt and are willing to hear alternate perspectives. You are curious about insights that may come. With courage, you may even ask yourself if you may have contributed in some way to what occurred.

Through healing, you become:

- More self-aware
- More deeply compassionate
- More self-confident
- Open to learn more about life, people, and relationships

You become a person others want to work with because they know they will have permission to be human when they are around you.

When you deny yourself the opportunity to heal from your pain, you betray yourself. You erode your life force. You rob yourself of insights, lessons, your restored capacity for trust, and potential future opportunities. You rob yourself of yourself. When you choose to embrace your pain and work through it, you regain your whole-

ness. As a participant said during one of our Trust Building¹ programs, “I am grateful for my experiences of betrayal because of how they contributed to the person I am today. They led me to the relationships I hold most precious and to the place I am in my life.”

“I am grateful for my experiences of betrayal because of how they contributed to the person I am today.”

In this way, betrayal can be a teacher. When you heal and renew, you transform yourself, your relationships, your organizations, and the world around you.

The Three Vantage Points

You can learn from betrayal, whether you have been betrayed, have betrayed someone else, or want to help others work through betrayal. In this book, we provide information relevant to all vantage points at the beginning of each chapter, and then we give information and advice that is specific to each of these vantage points. Because human relationships are systems, it is unlikely that you will ever fall into just one of these categories. If you are honest with yourself when someone has breached your trust, you will often find that you *also* betrayed that person or yourself. And when you become cognizant of your behavior that betrayed another, you may also discover that you were reacting to having been betrayed by that person, or by someone else entirely. Often, we find that people engage in trust-breaking behavior at work when they have been betrayed at home. Betrayal, as we’ve said, begets betrayal.

Because broken trust is so pervasive in the workplace, it is likely that you see it around you even if you don’t feel directly involved in it. We are often asked by caring people who are concerned about other individuals or the overall work environment what they can do to help others rebuild trust. We applaud the intentions and courage of these people. If you are one of them, we first point you to the material about what to do when you feel betrayed. Why? Because you cannot

be an instrument for healing and rebuilding trust if you are currently troubled by (or suffering from) unresolved pain yourself. It's likely that as you help others, your own feelings will surface. Those feelings may be related to what you see in the workplace, or they may be feelings you carry from home or even from your childhood. Be prepared to go on your own journey as you set out to accompany others on theirs. Others have to see you as trustworthy before they will open up to you and be willing to receive your help.

The Seven Steps for Healing

“The man who does things makes mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake of all—doing nothing.”

—Benjamin Franklin
Statesman, scientist, and one of
America's founding fathers

Whether you are feeling betrayed, coming to terms with having betrayed another, or simply trying to help, the Seven Steps for Healing² will provide a process to achieve renewal.

The Seven Steps for Healing model is universal. It emerged out of Dennis's experience with some of the most basic sources of betrayal: broken promises, dishonesty, and abandonment. He found value in understanding the reasons bad things happened, in integrating the lessons to be learned, in forgiving himself and his betrayer, and in letting go and moving on.

My world came crashing down. I came back from a four-day doctorate research session and discovered that my wife had been having an affair with a co-worker for six months. I was stunned, confused, and disoriented. I was angry and upset. But most of all, I questioned myself: How could I not have noticed?

I loved my wife and our two little boys. For the year and a half after discovering the affair, I did whatever I could to hold the marriage togeth-

er. I went to counseling to work through my issues and the pain of my failing marriage, but my wife was not willing to join me in this effort.

We worked out an amicable divorce agreement and were awarded joint custody of our boys. While I had my boys on alternating weekends, some holidays and vacations, I lost the life with them that I had cherished.

A very painful part of the early years after the divorce were my long and sad rides home after dropping the boys off at the end of their weekends with me. I cried so hard, I often had to pull over to the side of the road because I couldn't see straight to drive.

The Seven Steps for Healing

1. Observe and acknowledge what happened

Observe the situation to become aware of what happened, and then fully acknowledge the impact on you, others, and your relationships. When you are betrayed, you often experience the impact as a loss: the loss of what was or the loss of what could have been. For healing to take place, you need to acknowledge that loss.

2. Allow feelings to surface

Express your feelings, whether they are anger, disappointment, hurt, sadness, fear, guilt, or confusion. Give yourself permission to feel upset. Find appropriate ways to release your emotions and give voice to your pain. Allowing your feelings to surface brings about a "release" that allows you to begin to work through your hurt and supports the healing process.

3. Get and give support

Identify support that will help you to recognize where you are stuck or struggling. Support helps you to move from blaming to problem solving. It helps you to move from being "the victim" to taking responsibility for yourself, your job, and your life so that you grow from the experience. You can find support within yourself or from other people.

4. Reframe the experience

Use your hurt and pain as stepping stones for healing. Consider the bigger picture, and what might have been going on for the other person involved and for you. Examine the choices and opportunities you now have. Find the purpose of this event in your life and tease out what you can learn about yourself, others, and relationships.

This intense pain continued for quite some time before subsiding. What I was grieving was the loss of my daily life with my sons—the loss of what could have been, but now would never be. I missed tucking the boys into bed every night, rubbing their backs as they dozed off to sleep. I missed making them breakfast and putting them on the school bus.

In my grieving, I needed to allow my feelings to surface, to release my anger, my hurt, and my deep pain. And I did, again and again.

While living this chapter of my life was a nightmare, years later I was able to see its enormously redeeming value. A powerful lesson for

5. Take responsibility

Courageously look at what part you may have played in what happened. You are not responsible for what was done to you, but you are responsible for how you chose to respond. Consider what you could have done differently, what actions you can take now to change the situation, and the gains you make by taking responsibility.

6. Forgive yourself and others

Compassionately ask what needs to happen for forgiveness to take place. Reflect on how this betrayal occurred. Forgiveness does not mean excusing the offending behavior but rather observing how the betrayal has affected you and others. Consider again your feelings surrounding the betrayal, and decide to release yourself from the burden of carrying those feelings.

7. Let go and move on

Ask what needs to be said or done to put this experience behind you. You do not forget the betrayal or fail to protect yourself from further betrayals. There is a difference between remembering and “hanging on,” and remembering so as to help yourself and others by drawing on the lessons learned. Stronger and more self-aware than you were before the trust was broken, you look forward rather than backward. You choose to act differently as you integrate and celebrate your learning.

me was that while I felt victimized, I certainly did not need to remain a victim. I chose to work through my pain and learned a lot about myself. I became more sensitive to others in pain, and how I could help them.

Through my healing, I was eventually led to my future wife and business partner, Michelle. Together, we developed the work that we do today. And my healing gave birth to the framework of these Seven Steps for Healing.

The other basis for the Seven Steps for Healing model is the extensive research on the grieving process. Experiencing a betrayal has much in common with experiencing a death. There is a sense of loss. Healing after a betrayal, as after a death, requires us to move through a series of emotions. In her examination of death and dying, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross defined the steps of the grieving process as shock, anger, denial, rationalization, depression, and acceptance.³ Our Seven Steps for Healing model (see box and figure) tells you how to take action to work through the feelings Kübler-Ross observed. These Steps show a manageable path to help you acknowledge and move through your hurt, with support, to reframe your experience, take responsibility, let go, and move on. Through the Seven Steps you will learn the lessons that betrayal has to teach you about relationships, life, and yourself.

Healing is a process that can't be short-circuited. The effects of broken trust won't go away on their own volition; you have to work through the process of healing. We have all been victims and been betrayed, we have all been perpetrators and betrayed others, and we all have a general desire to help others. No matter where you start, the Seven Steps for Healing are intended to serve as a framework to help you work through the painful feelings of betrayal toward rebuilding the trust that will restore your confidence and commitment and reignite your energy.

Each of the Seven Steps represents a phase of the healing process. Although they are numbered sequentially, people do not necessarily work through them in a linear fashion. You may be experienc-



ing multiple Steps at the same time; it is very common to work on observation and acknowledgment (Step One) at the same time as you are allowing your feelings to surface (Step Two) and seeking support (Step Three). Only the starting point, awareness (Step One), is fixed. You may complete one Step and move to the next, only to re-experience aspects of the earlier Step. Feelings come in waves; there are highs and lows, ebbs and flows. All of that is movement toward healing.

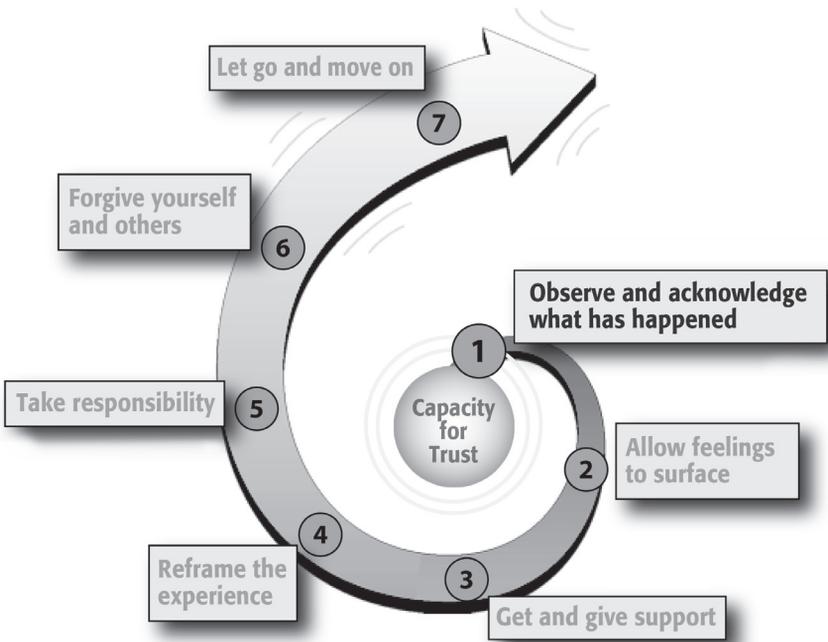
“There is no comparison between that which is lost by not succeeding and that which is lost by not trying.”

—Francis Bacon
British statesman and philosopher

STEP

1

Observe and Acknowledge What Happened



*“The distance is nothing; it is only **the first step** that is difficult.”*

—Marie de Vichy-Chamrond,
the Marquise du Deffand,
French woman of letters

“I couldn’t get over what had happened. It was as if someone punched me in the gut. I was shocked that my boss took credit for work I had done so that she would look good in the eyes of the executive team.”

Betrayal hurts, and so does being let down, disappointed, or frustrated when the people you work with break the trust you have in them. The larger the breach, the greater the hurt. Observing and acknowledging how trust has been broken represents the first Step in the healing process. In this Step, you become conscious and aware of your thoughts and feelings about what happened. The opposite of awareness is denial. You cannot heal that which you are ignoring, denying, or rationalizing away. In this way, the first Step of rebuilding trust raises your self-awareness. Your partner in this Step is courage: the courage to be honest with yourself and see situations for what they are.

The opposite of awareness is denial.

No matter if you have been hurt or if you have hurt another, you start healing broken trust by observing how trust has been broken and acknowledging the impact of the breach.

Observing what has happened involves noticing the obvious and the not-so-obvious actions and behaviors that have transpired. A major betrayal such as a badly handled large-scale layoff is pretty obvious and may be what everybody is talking about. But just as harmful are the little things that add up and become big—things like snippets of gossip, which can add up to damage someone’s reputation, and missed deadlines, which ultimately let others down. Remember to look for those patterns, too.

Acknowledging the impact includes recognizing what you and others are experiencing. Often people experience the impact of betrayal as a loss: the loss of what was or the loss of what could have been. You may be experiencing something as severe as the loss of a relationship, the loss of opportunity, or the loss of performance and results. Or, you may recognize that the breach of trust has resulted in the loss of *complete* confidence in someone else, so that you become more cautious in how you work with that person. You may also sense

the loss of energy, confidence, and commitment that are telltale signs of broken trust.

The impact of a trust-breaking situation and the feelings associated with the loss vary in intensity depending on a number of factors. The person who breaks trust often underestimates the negative power of her behavior on the receiver. She may think, “Yes, I made a mistake, but what is the big deal?” A minor situation may feel like a big deal to someone if it surfaces unresolved feelings from a past betrayal. Impact is also proportional to the significance of the relationship involved. A minor letdown by an individual you work with for a few days will not hit you as hard as a significant betrayal you experience with someone you have collaborated with for years.

When You Have Been Betrayed

Kerri had been the Vice President for External Development for a prominent medical research center for eight years. During her tenure, she had developed deep relationships with people throughout the organization. Her team members, including Event Coordinator Kim, had a great deal of respect for her and cared about her deeply as a person. In short, they trusted her.

The entire team grew terribly concerned when Kerri became so ill that she needed to take a medical leave of absence. During her leave, they rose to the occasion to ensure that the team’s performance did not skip a beat. For two months, Kim and the others did whatever was necessary to manage key deliverables and to sustain the team’s spirit. They willingly chose to do whatever was necessary, out of team spirit and caring for their boss. They did not want Kerri to worry about work. They missed her and looked forward to her returning healthy.

Eventually, Kerri did return to work and the team welcomed her back.

A few weeks later while at a conference, Kim chatted with a colleague from another medical research center. During the course of the conversation, Kim learned that Kerri had been consulting to that

organization while on medical leave. Kim just could not imagine that this story was true.

Dismayed, Kim called Kerri. She could not believe her ears when Kerri confirmed that the story was true. In that moment, Kim felt as though the rug had been pulled out from under her. The last two months flashed by before her eyes. She thought of the family dinners she had been late for, the Saturday morning soccer games she missed, the early morning arrivals to get a head start on the day and, above all, the prayers she had said in support of her boss's recovery. Kim felt taken advantage of, used, and manipulated. It was clear to her that she did not have the kind of relationship with Kerri she thought she did.

Kerri and Kim had worked together for eight years. For Kim, her relationship with Kerri was one of significance. Kerri was her trusted leader, advisor, and mentor. Because of that closeness, this betrayal impacted her quite deeply.

Your first step in healing is to acknowledge and observe what happened and the impact on you and the relationship. Pay attention to your inner experience, your questions and feelings, and add them up. Doing so will help you to *consciously observe* the situation, almost as if from the outside. You will *witness* what happened. Then you can put words on what you see: “Kerri broke the trust I thought we had in our relationship.” Or even, “Kerri took advantage of me and the team.” Either way, Kim ends up significantly disappointed. The next box walks you through how to observe this common outcome of broken trust.

Sometimes when you are in pain, you may have difficulty understanding where your feelings are coming from. You may ask, “What happened? What was that about?” When you hurt, you may also find yourself pulling back, withdrawing, and shutting down.

In such moments, you can begin to *acknowledge the impact* of the situation. For instance, the impact on Kim was so great that she began questioning her own perceptions and judgment. Betrayal

Observe Your Disappointment

Disappointment related to broken trust can lead to feelings of disenchantment that dissolve your commitment to your organization's mission and your connection to co-workers. Some disappointment may be a result of current organizational dynamics; some of the disappointment may be deeper-seated, stemming from old patterns learned during childhood. Either way, it is important to ask yourself, "What exactly am I feeling disappointed about?" "What is contributing to my letdown?"

Use these reflection questions to help you listen to where your pain is coming from:

? Is it a lack of appreciation for all your efforts?

Is it a lack of confidence in your competence?

Is it a lack of understanding or misunderstanding of what you are trying to accomplish?

Is it a lack of acknowledgment of who you are and what you have to offer?

One of the most subtle and yet insidious betrayals you can experience is not being fully seen or heard for who you really are. Not being recognized for your contribution to others and to the company hurts at an innate level. It takes courage to face and work through such pain.

touches you at your core when it causes you to question your own perceptions and judgment.

Have you ever been in a similar situation and asked yourself these questions:

? How could I have been so foolish?

How could I have not seen this?

How could I have trusted someone who would behave in such a manner?

This process involves acknowledging the strain or loss and feelings you are experiencing. Let's take a look at how some peo-

ple we've worked with have observed common trust-breaking workplace behaviors and tease out the impact in terms of feelings and experience of loss:

● “My boss keeps giving me tasks at the end of the day, knowing that I don’t have to leave at a certain time to pick up children. She always leaves at 5 P.M. on the dot and I end up staying until 8 P.M. Those extra hours cut into my personal life. I feel taken advantage of.”

— *“I am agitated.”*

— *“I feel put-upon.”*

— *“I wonder if this is the place for me.”*

➔ **Loss of commitment**

● He told me that working on this project would increase my visibility with management. But then he presented it without acknowledging or crediting my work. He double-crossed me. I lost the opportunity to demonstrate my competence.”

— *“I was cut off.”*

— *“I feel used.”*

— *“I wonder what I did to deserve this.”*

➔ **Loss of confidence**

● “I arrive at meetings on time, but my co-worker is consistently ten to fifteen minutes late. It seems as though she thinks that what she has to do is more important than what I have to do. I don’t think she is respecting my time or the importance of the job I have to do.”

— *“I feel disrespected.”*

— *“I’m frustrated and disappointed.”*

— *“I feel insulted and devalued.”*

➔ **Loss of commitment to the relationship**

“My colleague assured me repeatedly that he would deliver his part of the project on time. When we were down to the wire, he didn’t come through. Three of us had to scramble late into the night to meet our deadline.”

“*I feel let down.*”

“*I am embarrassed.*”

“*I feel taken advantage of.*”

➔ **Loss of complete confidence in a colleague**

“I’ve worked for this company since its inception, sacrificing my weekends, pay, and benefits during the startup phase. Now we’re up and running and they’ve ‘eliminated’ my job and me along with it. I gave my best to this company, and this is what I get?”

“*I am extremely disappointed.*”

“*I feel used.*”

“*I am scared about the future.*”

➔ **Loss of confidence in self**

Left unacknowledged, the impact of any of these experiences can fester and deteriorate into more serious sentiments, such as:

“*I feel betrayed.*”

“*I’m depressed.*”

“*I’m worthless.*”

“*I feel vulnerable.*”

“*I feel like hell!*”

“*I just don’t care anymore.*”

“*I give up!*”

“*I will get back at them.*”

➔ **Loss of energy**

Do any of these examples of behaviors that break trust sound familiar? Are you able to acknowledge your letdown?

At this stage, don't try to analyze, understand, or intellectualize your thoughts and feelings—simply “notice” them. You don't need to come up with solutions or resolutions right now. This Step is about giving yourself permission to be honest with yourself as you observe and acknowledge what is so.

When You Have Betrayed Others

We all have experienced being betrayed by others. And, the truth is, we all have betrayed others as well. It takes inner strength to look at ourselves in the mirror and courageously

We all have betrayed others. We don't mean to hurt others, but we do.

see how we have hurt or let others down—often without even knowing it. We don't mean to hurt others, but we do. At work, we hurt our co-workers. At home, we hurt our spouses and other loved ones. We are most often unaware or unconscious of the mistakes we make, but they still damage the trust within our relationships. Michelle lived through such an experience several years ago:

I had developed a very close relationship with my coach, Georgia. Over time, the relationship grew into a friendship. During an extended weekend trip, Dennis and I were visiting Georgia and her husband, Drew, at their home. Drew performed in a band on weekends and had made arrangements for us to attend his gig.

The first day we were there, Dennis and I visited his alma mater, which was outside the city where Georgia and Drew lived. While there, we were invited to a special alumni business-networking meeting. “Great opportunity for making business contacts! There will be people there who want to meet you,” we were told by the alumni office representative. But the event was on the same night we were to see Drew perform. We were so excited about the special evening with Georgia and Drew. And, we were presented with a business opportunity to make the kinds of contacts so impor-

tant for our early-stage business. We began to troubleshoot. Maybe there was a way we could go to both events? Perhaps we could join Georgia at Drew's performance a bit later in the evening?

I shared the presenting opportunity and posed these questions to Georgia. It seemed simple and straightforward to me. I thought Georgia, as my coach, would surely have considered the idea positively or seen some creative solutions. Yet her immediate reaction was just the opposite: distant coldness, glaring stares, and painful silence. When I observed that I had inadvertently offended her, I retracted the question and apologized profusely.

I felt sick to my stomach. I had to face the truth that while my actions were unintentional, with that one question, I had unintentionally broken her trust and she felt betrayed. She was deeply hurt by me and consequently shut down. I had lost a person and a relationship that were special to me.

When you have hurt another person, observing and acknowledging involves honestly facing the truth about how you have betrayed others—even, and especially, if you did so inadvertently, unintentionally, maybe even unconsciously. A perceived intention may breach trust, even if action does not occur. Michelle only contemplated the



Reflection Question

When might you have unintentionally betrayed others?

possibility of arriving late for Drew's performance. While that consideration was not carried out, the intent implied in the consideration contributed to a breach of trust. For Georgia, Michelle's consideration implied that attending Drew's performance and spending the evening together was not as special to Michelle as it was for Georgia. Further, Georgia concluded that the relationship in general was not as significant to Michelle as it was to her. When people hurt, sometimes they are inclined to draw such exaggerated, illogical conclusions stemming from their pain.

Pay Attention to Signs of Betrayal

Have you ever withdrawn and shut down as a result of disappointment? Your own experience and reaction to being hurt helps you to understand that of others. Often the people you betray are not able to talk to you about what is going on. You may need, therefore, to look for subtle and not so subtle signs that tell you someone is hurt:

? Is he visibly upset? Is her head down? Is he avoiding eye contact? Are there tears in her eyes?

Is he abrupt or short or exhibiting other signs of anger?

Is she unusually quiet, pulled back and reserved toward you?

Is he unresponsive? Ignoring or shunning you?

Once you are able to observe these signs, you can then pay attention to them. You pay attention by sharing your observations and asking questions to help you understand what is behind these reactions and how you may have contributed to the situation.

Healing is a process of inquiry. Your questions guide the process. Share what you see and ask questions for understanding.

“I have the impression that you are upset. Have I done something to hurt you? If I have, I would like to know.”

“I am aware that I may have let you down. I want to understand how my behavior impacted you.”

“You appear to be pulling back. I would like to understand what is contributing to it and what part I had in it.”

“I see that you are hurt. I am aware that I was abrupt yesterday and may have offended you. Is that true?”

“I have noticed a shift in our working relationship. I am having a hard time reaching you and have the impression that you are avoiding me. Have I done something to let you down?”

“I sense a shift in our interactions. I experience you being abrupt, which is highly unusual. What is going on? Did I do something to disturb you?”

When you share your observations and ask questions with a genuine willingness to understand your part in a situation, the door to healing opens.

Respond to What Others Say

Chances are, you'll feel unsettled when you hear how you inadvertently or accidentally let someone down. The situation may be so significant that you feel knocked off your feet. If that's the case, simply listen for now, and let the person know that you want to understand the situation before you respond. If you react when you are ungrounded, you're likely to surface feelings or abdicate responsibility and inadvertently breach trust again. Instead, take some time for yourself. Allow your feelings to surface, get support, reframe the situation, and determine your responsibility (Steps Two through Five). Then, you'll be prepared to acknowledge your responsibility, ask forgiveness, and move forward in the relationship.

In less significant situations and with practice, you may be able to move through the Steps very quickly. If so, you may choose to react immediately to what the person you let down says by *sharing* how this awareness has impacted you.

"I really blew it. I hate that my failure to deliver as promised created significant hardship on you. I feel embarrassed and am sorry for how my failure to keep our agreement impacted you."

"I understand how I behaved in a self-serving way during that meeting. How could I have been so self-centered as to have completely ignored your needs? I feel ashamed of myself."

"I now regret pushing so hard to finish that project; the cost to you, me, and others was too great. I am so sorry."

Through self-exploration and acknowledgement, negative feelings begin to subside. You are on a path of renewal that will restore the essential trust in your relationships.

Observing Signs of Broken Trust and Its Impact

Here are some examples of how people we have worked with have *observed* workplace betrayals and expressed their feelings regarding the *impact* of those breaches:

Observation: "As a 30+ year veteran of this company, I could teach these young supervisors a lot, but they think they know it all, just because they have a college education. They talk to me like I don't know anything."

Impact: "I feel underutilized and devalued. When I go, everything I know goes with me."

Observation: "Management calls people at the last minute to change schedules or ask us to work overtime or double shifts. These requests come out of the blue. I am not able to make plans to be with my family, to have a personal life."

Impact: "I feel devalued; that I do not count. I feel management does not care about me. I wonder why I should care about them or the organization?"

Observation: "I am noticing sloppy work and mistakes happening more frequently. I don't see signs of things improving."

Impact: "I really don't care anymore. I come in, I do the basic work that is required of me, and I go home. I see a growing sense of hopelessness and helplessness."

Observation: "When an operator makes a mistake and an accident happens, management lists them as 'behavior problems' and they are told to go to 'counseling.' This reaction implies blame and assumes the employee is 100 percent at fault. As a result, people attempt to cover up mistakes or injuries."

Impact: "People feel vulnerable with the process and wonder why they aren't invited to discuss and problem-solve so the same mistake/accident won't happen again."

Observation: "My supervisor is constantly looking over my shoulder in a search for mistakes. I feel she does not trust me to do my job."

Impact: "As a result, there is a growing sense of tension, stress, and fear between us."

When You Want to Help Others Rebuild Trust

*“A life is not **important** except in the **impact** it has on other lives.”*

—Jackie Robinson
Hall of Fame baseball player

Have you observed other people’s behavior that has caused trust to erode? As someone on the outside of the behavior pattern, you can play a very powerful role in observing what has happened and helping people to acknowledge the impact. Chances are that you can see that which the betrayed and betrayer cannot, because they are blinded by pain or guilt.

To fully *observe* what is happening, start by raising your periscope. Look for the subtle signs of distrust, such as low energy or enthusiasm, lack of confidence, and/or unwillingness to commit. The box on page 28 captures verbatim comments of people we have worked with as they express these signs and acknowledge their impact.

Pay attention to what specific actions, activities, and events may be building and breaking trust. Be careful not to overlook small, subtle signs of distrust, such as people coming late to meetings, missing appointments, avoiding speaking directly to individuals, gossiping, and backbiting.

» **Trust Tip** *The healing process starts with awareness. Observing and acknowledging people’s concerns regarding an action and the impact of that action are the first Steps of the process.*

Find out what is important to people. Listen to what they are saying in the hallways, the break rooms, and on the shop floor. Consider what is most important to pay attention to. Listen with compassion, without judging, rationalizing, or blaming. People in pain need to be heard and understood.

You may be the first to acknowledge that trust has been broken. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Articulating the truth shows them that you genuinely care and creates a safe container for healing. You will name "the elephant in the room:" behavior that is obvious but that no one is talking about. Because you are one step removed from the situation, you can offer words to describe the behavior; one of those words might be betrayal. The very act of acknowledging the breach of trust helps bring it to the surface where healing can start.

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

As we have indicated, it is important to acknowledge the impact of the betraying behavior. Ask the person who experienced betrayal to identify what she experienced. Help her articulate the impact and recognize the feelings of loss she is experiencing. The box gives you an easy-to-use framework to help people express the impact they are feeling.

At times, the way you acknowledge betrayal may be to step in when you see a pattern repeating. You can speak up when certain colleagues are always late to meetings, never get projects in on time,



Reflection Question

What do you see and hear regarding what people are concerned about in your workplace?

or hold up the team's progress because their piece is often incomplete. It takes courage to acknowledge a behavior that is hurting rather than supporting others. To stop the cycle of betrayal begetting betrayal, have essential conversations in private, share your observations, and seek to understand where others are coming from. In so doing, you are helping others to become more self-aware. What is important is to intervene with caring and compassion versus judgment and blame. Judging others only creates greater pain. No one wants to be judged.

A Framework for Helping Others Observe and Acknowledge Betrayal

You can play an effective role in helping others to rebuild trust by assisting them in observing and acknowledging that which they may be unable to see due to their pain, guilt, or denial.

Our friend and colleague, Rob Goldberg, offers a simple framework that we adapted. Use it with those you are trying to help observe a trust-breaking situation and acknowledge its impact:

- 1. When:** Encourage the parties to describe the *situation or context* regarding when and where the trust-breaking situation took place. Ask them to be specific. An answer may sound like:

Last Wednesday when we were in our morning team meeting discussing the necessary resources each member needed to complete their part of the team project, . . .

- 2. What:** Ask them to describe the behavior concerning the actions they observed, listing specific behavior, not inferences:

You spoke for 25 minutes of the allotted 30-minute time slot for our topic. Most of your material was about your personal needs and negated the interests of others.

OR

I spoke for 25 minutes of the allotted 30-minute time slot for our topic. I covered my needs in depth.

- 3. How:** Instruct them to express the impact of the behavior on them. Help them to understand what was lost by the behavior.

I felt irritated that I did not have an opportunity to voice my needs or express my concerns regarding my part of the project. I noticed a number of the other team members pull away from the table and disengage from the discussion for the rest of the meeting.

OR

When I noticed a number of team members pull away from the table and disengage from the discussion for the rest of the meeting, I sensed that I had created that distance. I felt badly for having taken up so much of the time. I realized that I had essentially "stolen" the meeting for my own purposes. In so doing, I had silenced others' thoughts and taken away their opportunity to advocate for their needs. I lost my trusted position within the team.

When you courageously raise awareness of behavior that is not healthy, you actually honor yourself and the relationships around you. You help to cultivate an environment of trust and renewal.

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