To Trust or Not to Trust? …is the Wrong Question

How Everyday Behaviors Build, Break & Repair Trust

When you hear "trust," think "behavior."

Trust is an assessment based on observations of a person's past behaviors, used to predict their future behaviors.
— Charles Feltman, *The Thin Book of Trust*

The Four Distinctions of Trust

Sincerity

Do your actions match your words?

Watch for: agreeing just to keep the peace.

Reliability

Can I count on you to follow through?

Watch for: people-pleasing and trouble saying no.

Competence

Do you know what you can do, and what you don't know?

Watch for: overestimating what you can take on.

Care

Do you have my interests in mind? Do I matter to you?

Watch for: losing track of how decisions affect others.

Why Trust Breaks Down

- We make mistakes.
- We judge ourselves by our **intent** and others by their **impact**.
- We avoid uncomfortable conversations.
- We don't want to let people down, and we do as a result.

Rebuilding Trust

1. Check in if you need more information. "Can you help me understand what happened?"

2. Make a request. "I know you care about ____. When ____ happens, the impact is ____. What would really help is ____."

3. Follow up. "Let's check in a few weeks from now and see how it's working."

Start with Yourself

Ask yourself: "If I'm totally honest, how would I rate myself on each of the four distinctions?"

Ask someone: "Is there anything I could do more of or less of to improve trust?"

Notes

Instead of "Should I trust them or not?" ask these questions:

What specific behavior is undermining trust?

What needs to change?