

BUILDING TRUST

By Louise Diamond

PART I

To lead for trust-building, we need to understand the foundations of trust. We posit four stages. These are:

1. I trust that I am safe with you; that you will not intentionally harm me.
2. I trust that you understand my concerns, needs, interests, and hopes.
3. I trust that you care about me and my concerns, needs, interests, and hopes.
4. I trust that you understand and care enough to stand in some form of solidarity with me. (For example, represent my interests when I'm not present, demonstrate commitment to my cause publicly, challenge any negative speech or oppressive action against me, my humanity, or my rights, etc.)

(These four steps build on a similar model by Alexander Consulting and Training, Inc., "Trust at Three Levels", 1993, Norfolk, VA.)

A relationship does not necessarily move in a linear fashion, from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and so on. Usually, the progress is two steps forward and one step back, or one step forward and two steps back. Trust is a very delicate thing.

ACTIVITY #1:

For each of the four stages of trust-building, think of a situation in your life or work where this stage was accomplished. How did it feel? What did you, or someone else, do to get the parties to this place? What obstacles did you have to overcome? What tools were effective?

PART II

Now let's look at seven actions that can help move a relationship through the four stages:

1. Meet and communicate face-to-face.
2. Establish familiarity through repeated interaction.
3. Demonstrate trustworthiness through action.
4. Demonstrate curiosity through honest inquiry.
5. Demonstrate vulnerability through honest sharing, self-disclosure, and other forms of personal risk-taking.

6. Demonstrate caring through empathy, appreciation, listening, and respect.
7. Engage in joint cooperative action.

ACTIVITY # 2:

Consider your own experience with each of these strategies. What has worked and what has not worked in your life or job experience? Why or why not? Which of these might be appropriate in a situation in your own life that needs more trust? What would you need to do to help yourself and the other parties involved take their next step?