

Rebuilding Their Trust In Each Other

1. Face to Face Sort-of

Have them talk to you while the other listens in. Translate what is being said in terms the other is likely to hear. (“What I hear s/he is saying is...”)

2. Establish Discussion Guidelines

Jointly develop “rules” for the conversation before starting and say when they are violated. Discover what they are willing to do to help resolve this? Ask them to remain calm and say why and what if.

3. Take a Mutual Risk

Make sure that the level of risk for both parties is equal. Ask each to risk something that is obvious to the other party.

4. Report Impact Not Intent

Ask them how the situation has impacted them not what they believe the other party’s intentions were or are.

5. Take Symbolic Cooperative Action

Ask each party to do something kind for the other person, (“Would you get so-and-so a chair?”) to offer some physical comfort, set the meeting at the other’s convenience, offer genuine help or resources to the other, or work together on a task that requires cooperative action and handoffs. Use own non-verbals to approve and acknowledge behavior that de-escalates tension and is even a little cooperative.

6. Walk In Their Shoes

Ask each party to understand what it might be like from the other person’s perspective, what assumptions, values and interests might be at stake. (“What is s/he thinking, feeling, valuing, wanting? How would you feel if you were in her/his shoes?”)

7. Two-way Change

Ensure that the suggestions you make require that both parties change their behavior to create a resolution that works. Figure out what each might be willing to do.

8. Remember A Positive Relationship

Remind them to think of a time when you were involved together in a cooperative effort or fun event. Ask them to talk about how that occurred and how to do more of that now.

9. Aim for Small Improvements

Take a break if needed. See if they are both willing to agree to only one small step. Follow-up in a timely way about how that step is working.