



How Trust is Rebuilt



One of the most important things to keep in mind when trust is being rebuilt is that *trust is a result of safety and security in the relationship*. You can make the decision to trust again once there is evidence that it's safe.

These exercises will discuss ways and give ideas for you to know when it's safe enough to start to take steps towards trust and work towards having the relationship healed.

Introduction

HOW TRUST IS REBUILT

The only way you can feel confident again that you can let your guard down is if you have a ***feeling*** that you are safe. You're likely aware that there is no way to create that feeling. If there is any pressure, frustration, annoyance, or any other negative response – those things only slow the process down.

Below is a list of areas in which trust needs to be developed or strengthened. Each woman might be a little different when it comes to how trust can be built in each of these areas, so as a part of your assignment, you'll have space to share with your husband some of the things that you need in each of these areas to help you feel safe.

You need to trust that he:

- Loves and care about you
- Is working to eliminate the addiction
- Will be open / honest with you
- Can be there for you and meet your needs
- Will protect your heart and is there to comfort and care for you and how you feel.
- He's willing to do the work necessary to heal the marriage

Some of these overlap, but being aware that there are different aspects of trust will help you to be clear about where you're working and which parts need attention.

The more predictable and consistent he becomes, the more safety you'll feel. As he creates a specific plan and follows through with action in each of these areas, you'll know he's committed and trust will start to more easily be rebuilt because you'll see and feel the difference in his approach.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A PLAN

It's crucial that he develops a plan of action specifically for how he's going to create safety and security in the relationship. You don't know and can't verify 100% whether or not he's telling the truth, so the only way you can know if he's changing is by watching his actions and gauging how you feel around him.

Many men mistakenly ask the question, "When is she going to trust me again?" Instead, focus on asking and answering this question, "What can I do to create safety and security for my wife." The answer to this questions will always yield a better result and will clarify the steps he needs to take. Here is a short list of ideas from which you can create rituals and habits around in order to stay consistent:

Actively engaged in the work of healing and in the marriage; consistency; opening up and sharing with you what he's feeling and thinking about; learning about himself and areas to continue to improve and share them with you; reading; journaling; being kind; humility; accountability and acknowledging your pain; service.

Instructions:

Really take some time to think about and write down the ways he can demonstrate to you that he is making changes and is becoming safer. Writing down what needs you have in each category will give him a clear target at which he can aim.

Be specific and concrete in your ideas and include multiple ideas per section if you can.

1. What ways can he demonstrate to you that he loves and care about you?

Example: Spend 30 minutes talking to me each day after dinner without electronics or other distractions.

2. Ways he can demonstrated he's actively working to eliminate the addiction?

Example: Him sharing his progress and emotions with me; reading and learning about ways to heal and telling me what he's learning; taking steps to learn from and prevent future relapses

3. Being open and honest?

Example: Let me know within 24 hrs if there was a slip; answer questions honestly and directly; taking accountability for your actions; being forthcoming instead of waiting for me to find or bring something up

4. How can he be there for you and meet your needs?

Example: Asking how he can help me each day; being available and present if I needs to talk

5. Ways to protect your heart and be there to comfort and care for you and how you feels?

Example: Check in with me each night about my day and how I am feeling; be willing to listen and comfort me if I needs support

6. How can he show he's willing to do the work necessary to heal the marriage?

Example: Provide consistent reassurance through word and action that you're committed and will do whatever it takes to heal; spending quality time together; having healing conversations about my pain

After you both have a chance to share your responses, discuss if there are things need to be adjusted and do so accordingly.

Also, we don't want him to get overwhelmed and think he needs to focus on all of these areas at once. Discuss and choose the most important area for him to focus on first and then make that the primary focus over the following week(s). Continue to expand and integrate the other areas as you go.

*Check in with each other regularly! That's a way he'll know if his efforts are working. Keep in mind that your goal is to create safety, so when you check in with each other, help him to know if he is on the right track. **Encourage him and acknowledge his efforts.** If you don't feel safer immediately, that is normal! At least acknowledging his efforts will help to motivate him to keep going.

It can be helpful to say something like, "I see you working hard at checking in with me even though it isn't easy. It's just going to take a bit of time for my wall to fully come down, but I appreciate what you're doing, I see it, and it's helping. I hope you'll continue to keep supporting me in this way. We are going to get there."

Keep in mind that this is a process. It takes time and consistency for you to feel like his changes are going to be permanent. The safer you feel, the more you can let him in and support him in his struggles and needs for connection. All of this can happen naturally as you feel the security in the relationship increase.

If you get stuck and need more ideas and help regarding things he can do to create safety, reach out in the FB group for ideas and support, as other couples will be working on the same thing and might have ideas you can use as well.