

REBUILDING TRUST AFTER HARM

LET TRUST BE EARNED THROUGH OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

Trust after betrayal, abuse, exploitation, discrimination, or repeated disappointment does not have to return all at once.

TRUST IS NOT OWED

- Forgiveness, reconciliation, contact, and trust are separate decisions.
- Someone can apologize and still need to demonstrate change over time.
- You can choose distance even if another person wants another chance.

LOOK FOR PATTERNS

- Do words and actions match over time?
- Do they respect 'no' without punishment, pressure, guilt, or retaliation?
- Do they take responsibility without blaming you for their behavior?
- Do they repair harm rather than demanding quick forgiveness?

USE LEVELS OF ACCESS

- Trust does not have to be all-or-nothing.
- A person may earn access to conversation before private information, money, your home, children, or other vulnerable areas.
- Increase access gradually when behavior supports it.

WATCH FOR COUNTERFEIT REPAIR

- Grand promises without sustained change.
- Apologies followed by the same behavior.
- Love-bombing, gifts, urgency, guilt, threats, or demanding that you prove trust.
- Using therapy, faith, family, culture, or children to pressure reconciliation.

HONOR CULTURE & CONNECTION

- Culture, family, spirituality, faith, chosen family, and community may be important sources of identity and repair.
- No tradition requires you to tolerate abuse or surrender safety.
- Seek people who respect both your values and your boundaries.

MY TRUST QUESTION

- What behavior would help me feel safer?
- What evidence would I need before increasing access?
- What boundary protects me while I observe?
- Who can help me reality-check without taking over my decision?

Trust can be gradual, specific, and evidence-based. Safety and autonomy come before pressure to reconcile.