



## **Training Consultation Supervision**

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# **A Formula for Rebuilding Trust**

When you have significantly hurt your partner and damaged their trust by breaking your word, it can be hard to know how you can rebuild that trust. Over the years my clients have taught me there are four key elements that you need to offer your partner consistently **over a long time** (think in terms of a couple of years of doing this):

### **1. Intimacy**

The most powerful way you can reassure your partner that you have changed is not to make promises (saying "I won't do it again" never reassures anyone) but to be SELF-AWARE of the forces working within your psyche, especially the ones that led to you breaching trust. You also need to **share** these in a vulnerable and open way. And your sharing needs to include a clear and coherent **plan** of what you will do that will prevent you from breaking the contract when those forces act on you. If your partner believes they know, in depth, what's going on in you, then they will feel confident they know what you are going to do next.

### **2. Reliability**

You can reinforce their confidence by being reliable – someone they can lean on. One part of this is being reliable PRACTICALLY. Being a person of your word who does what they say they will, goes to where they say they are going, turns up when you said you will be there etc. This extends to the small things – being reliable with household chores or turning up on time. In some cases, it can be even more important that you don't do what you said you wouldn't do or go where you said you wouldn't go.

The other part is being reliable EMOTIONALLY – being supportive and caring to your partner. Particularly when they are upset, even angry, about the hurt you have done to them. If you want to rebuild trust, you have to tolerate facing the consequences of your choices over and over again. Your partner doesn't want to keep remembering or being distressed, so don't treat them like they're being deliberately difficult when they bring their pain to you. Instead, see it as an opportunity to rebuild.

### **3. Empathy**

Showing that you care about the pain, confusion, self-doubt and anger you have caused is essential to rebuilding trust. Your spouse needs to know that their distress affects you and matters to you. Being able to consistently show this kind of EMOTIONAL empathy is the best way to make amends. However, it is also important to show COGNITIVE empathy, to say and show that your partner's feelings make sense in the circumstances. So often, when our partner's distress triggers our own shame or embarrassment, we try and minimise or undermine the reasons why they are upset.

### **4. Persistence**

It takes time to rebuild trust. You have to keep doing these things over and over again, typically long past the point when YOU think it's fair or reasonable. Your partner's pain is not yours and only they can judge when they feel they can trust again. So if the relationship is important to you, just keep going.

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