

she betray me? Will he love me and care for me if I get sick? Will he leave me?

These are all very real fears we may have when we decide to commit to one person for a lifetime. When we fall in love we are often on our very best behavior. We lead with the healthiest side of ourselves. But as relationships progress, each person gets more real, more transparent, and therefore more vulnerable. None of us has it all together, and none of us is without our idiosyncrasies or insecurities no matter how together we may appear. And here's where the real magic comes in—the more honest we are, the more we can discover that our partner really loves us for who we are, and not the idealized version of

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us that shows up when we first begin to date. Vulnerability creates trust, and trust is the oxygen your relationship needs to breathe. Trust is also built over time, and over lots of conversations—like the ones Ben and Leah had, and the ones you'll have in this book. Trust is the backdrop to any relationship. It's an action word—both a verb and a noun. Trust happens in the little moments when we show our partner we are there for them and they do the same for us. Trust is built in small moments of attuning to our partner, and listening like a friend and ally when our partner is experiencing a negative emotion—sadness, anger, disgust, or fear, even if those emotions are about us. In all of our decisions we're thinking of maximizing our partner's benefits as well as our own. Mutual trust rests in the belief that both of us are thinking for two.

We aren't negotiating for the best deal for just ourselves. We're always considering the cost of any choice for our partner, too.

There are many ways people break trust in a relationship, but here are ten of the most common:

- Not showing up on time
- Not making their partner a priority
- Not being there when their partner is hurting or sick
- Not contributing to the well-being of the family (*me rather than we*)
- Not keeping promises
- Keeping secrets
- Lying
- Humiliating or putting down partner in public or private
- Committing an act of emotional or physical infidelity
- Being physically violent

Each and every day we're married or in a relationship, in every interaction, within every argument, lie these important questions:

- Do you cherish me?
- How important am I to you?
- Do I come first in your life?
- Will you take me for granted?
- Are you always looking around for someone better than me?
- Will you care when I'm upset with you, and listen to my concerns?

We demonstrate the answers to these questions in ways both big and small, and this builds our emotional investment and commitment and trust day in and day out. We show our partner every day that we cherish his or her positive qualities and minimize the importance of the negative qualities. If you discuss your values around trust and make a commitment together to respect those values with your actions, your relationship will flourish.

### WHEN TRUST HAS BEEN BROKEN

If you break any of your agreements about trust, there are steps to fix what's been broken. These steps hold true for minor or major breaks, but you can't skip any of these steps.

- 1 Set a specific time and place to talk.
- 2 Each partner names the feelings he or she experienced during the incident or breach in trust, without blame or criticism.
- 3 The receiving partner listens without feedback or judgment.
- 4 Each person describes his or her point of view about what happened during the incident without blaming or criticizing their partner, while their partner only listens and tries to empathize. The listener shouldn't bring up their own point of view until it's their turn to speak.
- 5 Explain and examine any feelings that were triggered by the incident but that were originally felt long before this relationship. For example, one of you is a no-show for a dinner date, and that triggers a feeling of abandonment

the other had from childhood or the rejection or infidelity in a past relationship.

- 6 Each partner assesses how they contributed to the incident and holds himself or herself accountable.
- 7 Each apologizes and accepts the other's apology.
- 8 You make a plan together to prevent this from happening again.

Each of the eight dates are experiments in vulnerability, and we *hope* that on this first date your conversation about what trust means to each of you will bring you not only closer together, but also closer to creating the relationship you both want for a lifetime.

### CHERISHING

Commitment is actually built on thinking and then communicating to one's partner that he or she is precious, and not replaceable. In one's mind, as well as in communication, we build commitment by nurturing our gratitude in what we have with our partner. We think to ourselves that no one can hold a candle to our partner, and in our mind we magnify the positive qualities our partner has and we minimize the negative qualities. We think and communicate that no one out there—real or imagined—can compare with our partner.

On the other hand, betrayal is nurtured by communicating to one's partner that he or she is lacking certain qualities we simply cannot do without, and therefore is highly replaceable. In one's mind, as well in communication, we build betrayal