



Surveys reveal that Americans have, on average, very few trusted confidants in our lives. Forty years ago, we had six to seven, now it's two to three. **If you thought you were alone searching for trusting relationships, you're not.** You're in the majority. Now the question is **who can you trust and how do you know it?**

If you're like the majority of us, you start by entering into trust through emotions. **Someone is nice to you, you embrace nice, and equate nice with trustworthy. Big mistake! Nice is nice. Trust, however, is earned.**

Trusting requires cognitive thinking skills in addition to emotional responses. There's critical thinking involved. Forty years ago, trustworthiness might have been measured by character, values, judgments and reputation - all built over time.

**Today, we move faster, and often use more superficial measures of money and material possessions.** A desire for speed and connection makes it more difficult to determine who is trustworthy and who is not. Solid trust is still built over time.

**Try taking these steps to avoid at least some of the painful experiences of discovering you've trusted the wrong person or a good person, but for the wrong thing.**

*Trust the right people for the right reasons and it changes your quality of life.*

1. Strive to **make thoughtful, decisions** about who to trust and for what. Ask others, do a search engine search, take your time. Pay attention to information as well and intuition.
2. Enjoy someone who is nice. But remember: being **nice is not the same as being trustworthy**, nice only means nice / fun / social / available.
3. Think about **what trust means - to you**. Write this down and look at it frequently.
4. **Don't expect perfect.** Perfect doesn't exist. Honesty and integrity do. Keep your eyes open for the places where people are trustworthy - there are many.
5. **Look for patterns of behavior and attitudes** in good times and, even more importantly, during times of stress and conflict in a relationship. These are telling!
6. **Trust can also be established in some areas and withheld in others.** Trust your accountant with figures, your friend to choose good movies, yourself for groceries...
7. **Stop yourself from jumping into trust too fast.** On average it takes 2 years in an active relationship for trust to be established. Slow down, enjoy, and trust over time.
8. **Don't get caught in thinking that the choice is between complete trust and no trust at all.** Neutral is a safer, healthier, better place to be until trust, or trust in specific areas, is warranted.
9. **Be trustworthy yourself.**
10. While you're at it, **appreciate the small and big ways in which trustworthiness shows up in your life.** Build a "trust" account of people you can count on for specific things.

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