



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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