



The Importance of Trust Based Relationships

Trust me. I am no expert on this subject. The very thought of writing an article on trust left me cold - to the point where I delayed the deadline for 3 months. My resistance around this subject, however, that told me that this was probably an area worth exploring - both professionally and personally.

Trust. Respect. Honesty. These words are banded around so regularly it is easy to loose touch with what they really mean on a day-to-day, moment-to-moment basis. It is how these values play out in our non verbal dialogue with ourselves and others that I am interested in. It's the subtle moments. The flick of the eyes, the touch of the face, the shift of the feet, the misplaced smile.



Nothing happens in the *inter*-relational space, without it first happening *intra*-relationally. You cannot build trust-based relationships externally without first cultivating self trust - do I trust myself to listen to my true feelings? Do I trust that I will take the time to recognise my needs? Do I trust that I will respect my needs and my 'self'? Can I make mistakes and practice self-empathy? Can I trust myself to speak my truth?

But wait a minute. Who is this I? Who is the self? This very expression suggests there are two of us. The I and the self. The ego and our true being. When I make a commitment to self-care, self-respect and self-love and follow through with it, I build my own self trust. These are no small tasks and require emotional maturity and skill.

Growing up with an alcoholic father, I learnt to navigate my way through the world by reading others. Always hyper-vigilant and sensitive to the mood swings of others, I became very good at anticipating other peoples' needs and views. This came at a cost. Spending all my time attending to my external world, I lost the ability to connect with my inner world. You cannot have self trust without having an open and honest relationship with your 'self'. If you spend all your time second guessing other people, you lose the most important relationship of all.

Often when I don't trust someone else, it is not the other who is wrong, bad, unpredictable, inconsistent. It is simply that I cannot trust myself when I am around this other person. I find myself moving into old people pleasing patterns - behaviour that does not serve me any longer and yet is a fall back mechanism in moments of stress. I move away from my 'being' and into my mind-identified self.

Horses offer such good learning on this subject. I always find it fascinating to observe how they respond to different people. Horses have their own intrinsic nature and way of being in the world, and yet they can also become accurate mirrors for our inner selves, reacting in ways that reflect what is going on under the surface for the human counterpart. I often

wonder why it is that a horse can respond completely differently to two people, while the human's actions on the surface appear to be exactly the same. What is the difference that makes the difference? It is that person's internal state. Is the handler in a state that says 'whatever happens, I know I can handle it', or is their state characterised by dialogue that would run more like 'I hope I can handle it'. Of course the horse draws reassurance from us when we know, truly and deeply in our core, that we are OK, that we are acting from a place of self-trust.

Join-Up is a fantastic tool for clearly demonstrating the bond of trust between human and horse. In the moment of Join-Up, the horse is often taking what they believe to be a big risk by walking in towards the human handler. You can often see them weighing up their options. Can I trust this person and walk right over to them or should I wait a little longer and see what happens next? Horses are often described as non-judgmental, but they do have the capacity for judgment when they are considering their personal safety. That is why working with young or 'problem' horses can be so rewarding - to see the horse take a chance on you is a great feeling. What a privilege that is.



Eckhart Tolle, the world renowned mindfulness teacher, has an interesting definition of trust. He says that trust is simply the absence of fear. Of course he is not talking about the kind of reality based fear, such as the lion is about to jump out of the bushes. He is talking about the fear we create internally - the fear of judgment, our own feelings, of living authentically. According to Tolle, trust is the natural state when we are living beyond our heavily mind-identified state and, instead, living from our true essence or being. This state of being is, of course, the place the horse lives from every day without trying. No need for mantras, 7 steps to trust, acronyms or flow diagrams. Once we are truly present, trust flows automatically. Trust just 'is'.

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Biography

Laira combines her skills as a Psychotherapist and Certified Monty Roberts Instructor to offer Equine Guided Psychotherapy for individuals and groups. Working with corporates, teens, vulnerable adults and individuals, she is passionate about facilitating people to recognise and build on their own excellence. Known for her clarity and warmth, Laira has a gentle non directive approach. One of Laira's core values in this work is the establishment of emotional safety for client, practitioner and horse.

While studying Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Laura discovered the work of internationally acclaimed horse trainer Monty Roberts and Equine Guided Psychotherapy (EGP). Exploring the connections between EGP, Monty's methods and Systemic NLP was the catalyst that led to her traveling to the USA to study Monty's methods in depth. Through working with many different horse personalities, Laura continues to explore the many subtle layers of communication and consciousness that these awesome creatures are capable of.

Certified Monty Roberts Instructor, BSc 1st Class Hons, Dip. Neuro-Linguistic Hypno-Psychotherapist, Master Practitioner NLP, BACP Coaching Division Member, full Member of Community for Contemporary Psychotherapy