

The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter

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In Spouse We Trust

I love Twitter. I set up my Twitter account in January of this year. I really have enjoyed it. Yesterday I sent out the following tweet: “Got ideas for a marriage newsletter topic? Any specific issues u would like to hear about?” I got several quick responses from my followers, and the consensus was folks would like to learn more about how to rebuild trust in a relationship. Great idea. So here we go.

Let’s first list the variety of ways trust can be lost in a relationship: 1.) Cheating; either physically, emotionally or both. 2.) Chronic lying, 3.) Addiction to drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling or pornography, 3.) Emotional, physical or spiritual abuse; family or domestic violence, 4.) Chronic relationship instability; breaking up, getting back together, threatening to leave or abandon, 5.) Any combination of the above four. Professionally, I see both sides of the coin; folks that have broken trust and folks that have lost trust. It is equally tough for both sides. A common question is “How long will it take for he/she to trust me?” The answer varies but when speaking with someone who has broken the trust, I will caution them that it might take much longer than they think, we are not talking months, but maybe years. Some folks will say, paraphrasing, “Well, I apologized, it will not happen again, why can’t he or she get over it?” Duh. It is not that simple. I will tell folks with this attitude that they must remember “you have made your bed, now you must sleep in it” at least for a while. If you betray someone’s trust, you must be empathetic to the fact that they are going to be anxious, distrustful, and to some measure angry for quite some time. You need to allow them to be there, don’t try to change how they feel. The more you can lay off, the more opportunity they will have to heal. Conversely, if you are the spouse who has lost trust, you have some responsibility too. Your primary responsibility is going to be grieving all of the anger and resentment created by the distrust, and beginning the process of forgiveness. You have a right to be hurt. But you need not bottle it up and let it eat away at your insides for 10 or 20 years. If your spouse is taking care of their end of the deal by rebuilding trust, then you need to find a way to slowly forgive them and move toward the future together. If you are constantly badgering them, looking over their shoulder and/or bringing up past transgressions over and over again, you are not going to have an opportunity to heal yourself, and they will resent you for this behavior.

If you have broken your spouse’s trust, remember the following:

- Be patient and give your spouse some space to breathe.
- You have made your bed, and you now must sleep in it.
- Empathize with the intense emotions and feelings your spouse is experiencing.

If your spouse has broken your trust, remember the following:

- Begin to grieve and deal with your anger and resentment.
- Learn to slowly forgive.
- Avoid badgering or interrogating your spouse.

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