

Trust And Communication Building Guide

A gentle way to use this resource

Begin anywhere. Read one section at a time, choose only what fits, and skip, adapt, pause, or stop as needed. Try one practice before adding another. Reflection is an invitation, not a requirement.

Created by Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC | My Reflective Collective

Educational wellness material. Not therapy, diagnosis, medical advice, crisis care, or a substitute for individualized professional support.

Before you begin

Take a moment to notice where you are starting. There is no correct answer and no requirement to complete every prompt.

What is most present?	What would feel supportive?
[ ] Tension or restlessness [ ] Heavy emotion [ ] Numbness or shutdown [ ] Racing thoughts [ ] Low energy [ ] Something else: _____	[ ] More steadiness [ ] More clarity [ ] Comfort or rest [ ] A practical next step [ ] Connection or support [ ] Something else: _____

A simple rhythm

1. Notice	Name what is happening without judging it.
2. Choose	Select one prompt or practice that fits your energy and circumstances.
3. Try	Use it gently for a clear amount of time. Smaller still counts.
4. Check	Notice whether you feel even slightly steadier, clearer, safer, or less alone.

Low-energy option

Read only the headings. Circle or note one sentence that feels useful. Then choose one action that takes five minutes or less. You can return later; stopping is allowed.

A supportive worksheet for clarifying needs, language, consent, repair, and respectful limits.

Use this at your own pace. Skip, adapt, pause, or stop. You are allowed to choose what fits your body, culture, privacy, energy, safety, access needs, and real-life limits today.

A printable reflection and practice resource Created by Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC. This worksheet is a free educational wellness resource from My Reflective Collective.

Use what supports you. Skip, pause, adapt, or connect with a licensed therapist, healthcare provider, advocate, or trusted support if reflection brings something up.

Please read before using this resource

Trust & Communication Building Guide

Emotional Processing, Reflection & Growth

This does not replace therapy This worksheet is a general educational and self-reflection resource. It is not individual therapy, group therapy, counseling, medical or psychiatric care, diagnosis, treatment, legal advice, or crisis intervention. It may be used alongside therapy or other qualified professional support when that is appropriate for you, but it does not replace those services.

Use choice and care You may skip a question, adapt an activity, pause, or stop. Some topics or exercises may bring up discomfort, strong emotions, memories, dizziness, or physical sensations. Clinical or wellness terms are used only for general education and are not a personalized assessment or recommendation.

Seek appropriate support

Consult an appropriately qualified professional about your individual mental health, physical health, medications, safety, legal matter, or treatment decisions. No outcome is promised, and information or external links may change.

Emergency and crisis needs text 988 for suicide or crisis support. Call 911 for an immediate emergency when that is safe and appropriate. Outside the United States, use local emergency or crisis resources.

Created by Michelle D. Elder with AI used as a collaborative drafting and organizing tool to support self-growth and reflection. AI-assisted material can contain errors or oversimplifications. This resource has educational intent and should not be treated as personalized professional judgment. reviewed for web immediate danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health

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Trust & Communication Building Guide

Activity 1: "What I Heard You Say" Game

- Goal: Improve active listening and ensure both partners feel understood.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Choose a Topic

- Pick a neutral or meaningful topic (e.g., "How was your day?" or "What stresses you out the most right now?").

- Avoid emotionally charged topics at first. 2. One Partner Speaks (1-3 minutes)

- Share your thoughts without interruptions.

- Speak in "I" statements ("I felt overwhelmed today because..." instead of "You never help me...").

3. The Listener Repeats Back

- The listener summarizes what they heard ("So, you're feeling overwhelmed because of work stress?").

4. Clarify & Confirm

- The speaker either confirms accuracy or clarifies: "Yes, exactly," or "Not quite, what

I

meant was..."

5. Switch Roles & Repeat

- The listener now speaks, and the first speaker listens.

- Do this 2-3 times a week to build stronger communication skills.

Activity 2: Weekly Relationship Check-In

- Goal: Strengthen trust through structured, open communication.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Set a Time

- Choose a consistent day/time (e.g., Sunday nights before bed).

- Make sure you're both in a calm and

distraction-free space. 2. Use These 5 Questions to Guide Your Check-In:

- What went well in our relationship this week?

- What was challenging for us this week?

- Is there anything we need to work on?

- How can I support you better next week?

- What is something you appreciate about me? 3.

Keep It a Safe Space

- No blaming or defensiveness-focus on solutions.

- Listen attentively and validate each other's feelings. 4.

End with a Positive Note

- Hug, hold hands, or say something affirming.

- Doing this weekly prevents resentment from building up and encourages ongoing connection.

Activity 3: The Trust Fall Conversation

- Goal: Create emotional safety by sharing vulnerabilities without judgment.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Set the Mood

- Choose a calm and private place.

- Put away distractions (phones, TV, etc.). 2. Take Turns Sharing Fears or

Insecurities

- One person shares one vulnerability or fear about the relationship.

- Example: "I sometimes worry that you'll

stop loving me." 3. The Listener Validates & Reassures

- No fixing, problem-solving, or getting defensive.

- Simply respond with: "I hear you. That makes sense. I want you to know I love you, and

I'm

here."

4. Switch Roles

- The listener now shares one of their own fears.

- This helps each partner feel safe and secure in the relationship.

Activity 4: The Nonverbal Connection Challenge

- Goal: Improve emotional closeness and strengthen nonverbal communication.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Sit Facing Each Other

- Find a quiet, comfortable spot.

- Sit close enough to touch but don't hold hands yet. 2. Set a Timer for 4

Minutes

- Look into each other's eyes.

- No talking, just maintain eye contact.

- Focus on your partner's face, expressions, and energy. 3. Discuss the Experience

- After 4 minutes, talk about what it felt like.

- Did it feel awkward at first? Did it become more intimate?

_____

_____

- Eye contact releases oxytocin (the "bonding hormone") and strengthens emotional trust.

Activity 5: The Appreciation Jar

- Goal: Build trust by reinforcing positive actions.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Get a Jar (or a Box)

- Keep it in a visible place (e.g., kitchen counter). 2. Write Daily Appreciation Notes

- Each day, write something you appreciate about your partner on a small note.

- Example: "I love how you always make me laugh." 3. Read Them Together Weekly

- At the end of the week, sit down and take turns reading the notes.

- This shifts focus from frustrations to the positives in your relationship.

Activity 6: The Hardest Question

- Goal: Deepen emotional intimacy by discussing difficult topics.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Each Partner Writes One Deep Question

- The question should be thoughtful and personal (not accusatory).

- Examples:

- "What's something from your past that still affects you today?"

- "What do you need most from me in tough times?" 2. Exchange Questions &

Answer Honestly

- Give your partner time to think.

- Listen fully before responding. 3. Reflect on What You Learned

- Discuss how the answers help you understand each other better.

- This strengthens emotional connection and encourages openness.

Activity 7: Love Language Challenge

- Goal: Learn how to express love in a way that matters most to your partner.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Take the Love Language Quiz

- Do it online at 5lovelanguages.com. 2. Focus on Your Partner's Love Language for a Week
- If their love language is Acts of Service fi Do helpful tasks.
- If it's Words of Affirmation fi Give heartfelt compliments.
- If it's Physical Touch fi Hug, hold hands more.
- If it's Quality Time fi Plan a date night.
- If it's Gifts fi Surprise them with a small token of love.
- This ensures you're loving your partner in the way they best receive it.

Activity 8: The "Tell Me More" Game

- Goal: Encourage deeper conversations without shutting each other down.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. One Partner Shares Something Personal

- Example: "I had a rough day at work." 2. The Other Partner Responds with "Tell Me More"
- Instead of giving advice or changing the subject, stay curious . 3. Repeat at Least Three Times
- Each time your partner finishes, say "Tell me more."
- This encourages deeper sharing.
- Prevents surface-level conversations and builds emotional connection.

Final Thoughts:

These activities work best when practiced consistently . Here's how you can integrate them into your relationship:

l Daily: "I Trust You Because…" Challenge, Appreciation Jar l Weekly: Relationship Check-In, Nonverbal Connection Challenge l Monthly: The Hardest Question, Conflict Rewind

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They are not therapy, diagnosis, medical care, legal advice, crisis care, or individualized safety planning.

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Do not store identifying or safety-sensitive answers where another person may find them.

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It does not replace care from a licensed clinician, healthcare professional, attorney, trained advocate, emergency service, or other qualified professional. Laws, court procedures, services, and risks vary by location and circumstance.

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Supportive practices and reminders

Trauma-informed choice

You are in charge of pace, privacy, and participation. Keep your eyes open if that feels safer. Change the words, position, movement, or environment. Skip any prompt that increases distress. You never have to describe a traumatic experience to benefit from grounding or reflection.

A one-minute mindfulness pause

Notice one point of support beneath you. Look around and name three neutral things you see. Notice one sound and one body sensation without trying to change either. Ask, 'What would support me in the next few minutes?' Choose the smallest workable response.

Believable affirmations

Choose language your mind can accept. Try: 'I can take one step at a time.' 'My needs and boundaries matter.' 'I am allowed to pause.' 'I can ask for support.' 'This moment is difficult, and it will not always feel exactly like this.' Edit any statement until it feels honest and respectful.

Practical tips

Pair reflection with water, food, movement, rest, medication as prescribed, or contact with a safe person when needed. Save the most helpful page where it is easy to find. Revisit the resource when you are relatively steady so the choices feel familiar during harder moments.

When more support is appropriate

A worksheet cannot provide emergency care, diagnosis, or individualized treatment. Consider a qualified health or mental-health professional when distress is intense, persistent, worsening, affecting daily functioning, or connected with safety concerns. In immediate danger, contact local emergency services or a crisis service available in your country.

Integrate and choose your next step

Pause after reading. More information is not always more helpful; the goal is to leave with one choice you can actually use.

What stood out?

_____

_____

What is one kind, realistic next step?

_____

_____

What support, boundary, or adaptation would help?

_____

_____

If this did not help

You did not fail. Try making the step smaller, changing from a thinking practice to a body or sensory practice, checking basic needs, or involving a safe person. Strong, persistent, or worsening distress may need professional or crisis support beyond a worksheet.