

Session 8: Processing Safety and Introducing Trust

Practice Assignment:

Use the Challenging Beliefs Worksheets (Handout 8.1) to analyze and confront at least one of your Stuck Points each day. Also, please read over the Trust Issues Module (Handout 9.1), and think about how your prior beliefs about trust were affected by your trauma. If you have trust issues, Stuck Points, related to yourself or others, complete at least one worksheet to examine those beliefs. Use the remaining sheets for other Stuck Points on your Stuck Point Log (Handout 6.1) or for distressing events that have occurred recently.

Session 8 Handouts:

8.1: Challenging Beliefs Worksheet (6 copies included)

9.1: Trust Issues Module

HANDOUT 8.1
Challenging Beliefs Worksheet

Date: _____ Client: _____

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HANDOUT 9.1
Trust Issues Module

Trust Beliefs Related to SELF: The belief that you can trust or rely on your own judgments and decisions. Trusting yourself is an important building block for developing healthy, trusting relationships with others

PRIOR EXPERIENCE

Negative	Positive
If you had prior experiences where you were blamed for negative events, you may have developed negative beliefs about your ability to make decisions or judgments about situations or people. A new traumatic event may seem to confirm these beliefs.	If you had prior experiences that led you to believe that you had great judgment, the traumatic event may have undercut this belief.
Symptoms Associated with Negative Trust Beliefs about the Self	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of self-betrayal • Anxiety • Confusion • Excessive caution • Inability to make decisions • Self-doubt and excessive self-criticism 	
Examples of Possible Stuck Points	
<p>“I can’t make good decisions, so I let others make decisions for me.”</p> <p>“Because I am a poor judge of character, I can’t tell who can be trusted.”</p> <p>“If I make choices, then they never work out.”</p>	

POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

If you previously believed that . . .	A possible alternative thought may be . . .
“I cannot trust my judgment” or “I have bad judgment,” the recent traumatic event may have reinforced these beliefs. It is important to understand that the traumatic event was not your fault and that your decisions did not cause the traumatic event.	<p>“I can still trust my judgment even though it’s not perfect.”</p> <p>“Even if I misjudged this person or situation, I realize that I cannot always realistically predict what others will do or how a situation may turn out.”</p>

(continued)

HANDOUT 9.1 (p. 2 of 3)

If you previously believed that . . .	A possible alternative thought may be . . .
"I have perfect judgment, and I never make bad decisions," then the traumatic event may have shattered this belief. New beliefs need to reflect the possibilities that you can make mistakes but still have good judgment, and that mistakes in judgment cannot always be blamed as the reason why traumatic events occur.	"No one has perfect judgment. I did the best I could in an unpredictable situation, and I can still trust my ability to make decisions even though it is not perfect." "My bad decision did not cause the event to happen."

Trust Beliefs Related to OTHERS: Beliefs that the promises of other people or groups can be relied on with regard to future behavior. One of the earliest tasks of childhood development involves trust versus mistrust: A person needs to learn a healthy balance of trust and mistrust, and to learn when each is appropriate.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE

Negative	Positive
If you were betrayed in early life, you may have developed the generalized belief that "No one can be trusted." A new traumatic event may serve to confirm this belief, especially if you were hurt by an acquaintance.	If you had particularly good experiences growing up, you may have developed the belief that "All people can be trusted." The traumatic event may have shattered this belief.

POSTTRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE

If the people you knew and trusted, or people in positions of authority, were blaming, distant, or unsupportive after the traumatic event, your belief in their trustworthiness may have been shattered.

Symptoms Associated with Negative Trust Beliefs about Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pervasive sense of disillusionment and disappointment in others.• Fear of betrayal or abandonment.• Anger and rage at betrayers.• After repeated betrayals, negative beliefs so rigid that even people who are trustworthy may be viewed with suspicion.• Fear of close relationships; particularly when trust is beginning to develop, active anxiety and fear of being betrayed.

(continued)

HANDOUT 9.1 (p. 3 of 3)

Examples of Possible Stuck Points

- “No one can be trusted.”
- “People in authority will always take advantage of you.”
- “If I trust someone, they will hurt me.”
- “If I get close to someone, they will leave.”

POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

If you previously believed that . . .	Possible alternative thoughts may be . . .
“No one can be trusted,” which was seemingly confirmed by the traumatic event, then you need to adopt new beliefs that will allow you to enter into new relationships from a neutral position that allows you to see whether various kinds of trust can be built.	“Although I may find some people to be untrustworthy in some ways, I cannot assume that everyone is always untrustworthy.” “Trusting another involves some risk, but I can protect myself by developing trust slowly and including what I learn about that person as I get to know him or her.”
“Everyone can be trusted,” then the traumatic event will have shattered this belief. To avoid becoming suspicious of the trustworthiness of others, including those you used to trust, you will need to understand that trust is not an either-or matter.	“I may not be able to trust everyone in every way, but that doesn’t mean I have to stop trusting the people I used to trust.”
“I can trust my family and friends,” then the traumatic event may have shattered your beliefs about the trustworthiness of your support system when these persons did not act the way you wanted them to after they learned about the traumatic event. Before you assume that you cannot trust anyone in your support system, it is important to consider why these people may have reacted the way they did. Many people do not know how to respond when someone they care about is traumatized, and they may have been reacting out of ignorance. Some people may have responded out of fear or denial, because what has happened to you made them feel vulnerable and may have affected their own beliefs.	“Trust is not an all-or-none concept. Some people may be more trustworthy than others.” “It may help to tell others what I need from them and then see if they do a better job of meeting my needs. I can use this as a way to assess their trustworthiness.” If you find that others continue to be unsupportive about the trauma, but kind to you in other ways, you may choose to adopt a statement such as “There are some people I cannot talk to about the traumatic event, but there are other areas of my life where I can trust them.” If a person continues to be negative or make blaming statements toward you, you might want to tell yourself, “This person is not trustworthy, and it is not healthy for me to have the person in my life at this time.”