

ΠΕΡΙ ΕΜΠΙΣΤΟΣΥΝΗΣ

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Change is inevitable. As long as I am alive I constantly change, in an active manner. Trust is a process that I am responsible for and influences how I change and how I experience changing.

Trust needs to be differentiated from hope and confidence. When trusting I take the risk of exposing my vulnerability to another person. I make an informed decision to rely on another's good intention towards me and I go ahead without guarantee.

I make a choice and I support it and I keep in mind the uncertainty concerning the outcome. I am aware of the risk I am taking. When I hope I ignore the unpredictable and the uncertain as factors of the field. Trust reflects contingency. Hope ignores contingency.

When trusting, I take into account that for every interaction there are many alternative outcomes. My decision to trust emerges from the ground of my assimilated resources and limitations. In this process I am actively aware of them and of the environmental conditions. I define the "good" outcome in a more flexible way and I am creative in dealing with the unknown.

If I don't consider alternatives I am in a situation of mere confidence. I perceive the possibility of loss, of a "bad" outcome, as external. I attribute it to the environment and I neglect it, in lack of alternative ways of coping with it. In trust, I am aware of the possibility of being disappointed and I choose an action in preference to another, in spite of this possibility. I am in touch with the fact that the risk of exposing my vulnerability is inherent in the process of decision making. Confidence is connected to danger, which is attributed externally, trust is connected to risks which are attributed to decision-making.

Trust is a process which is more than relying on another just based on prior observation, or their fear of detection and punishment or their sense of morality. Trust is located in the continuum of total unguarded surrender to another's good will and total observation and checking, or effort to control the environment. Trust is where security and freedom meet.

Thus, trust can be considered as a crucial strategy for dealing with uncertain and uncontrollable environment. Trust enables individuals to adapt to complex social environment and thereby benefit from increased opportunities. Through trust I allow myself to be more spontaneous and open, since differentiation is no longer threatening. Possibilities of action increase proportionally to the increase of trust.

My ability to trust is formed by: i) The embodied experience of having my (biological, emotional, communicational) needs timely met, by my caregivers, in a period where my survival was totally depended on others. ii) When recognized, respected and accepted as a different person, and trusted as such, I form the ability to perceive myself as trustworthy. Consequently I am in contact with my needs, I own my feelings and I interact with the environment in a trusting way. iii) During this interaction I am aware of the current recourses and limitations (mine and the environment's), and of the different alternatives. iv) When trusting I am active, and in order to earn the trust of others I need to be socially active. Trust is evolving as the relationship evolves. v) Trust involves mutuality, a surrender to the existential insecurity of the between. Thus, a bond is created which promotes trust. Nevertheless, being human means being in a relation. vi) When I have participated in this process of trust as a unity and with spontaneity, I withdraw from the interaction, experiencing a deep feeling of happiness.

Trust includes shared responsibility (it takes two to tango!). The initiator of trust needs to be aware of his ego dystonic parts, the points where he is vulnerable, in order to maintain a developmentally appropriate self protection. At the same time, he needs to let go of his specific expectations and to be open to meet the other person's unique abilities and limitations. The receiver of trust needs to be honest about his competence to fulfill what he is trusted for, as well as to be aware of his boundaries. He also needs to appreciate the other's trust, and to have empathy. Both processes reflect the notion of inclusion in dialogue.

In addition to the abovementioned, concerning trust in an intrapersonal and interpersonal level, trust is a very important dimension of social life. It promotes contribution on a societal level and the general wellbeing. Vertical trust (i.e. between citizens and institutions) and horizontal trust (i.e. amongst citizens) are interrelated.

The citizens trust that the state institutions were created with the intention to serve the well being of the society and have the resources to do so. The governments, in turn, respect the privacy and trust the resources of the citizens to fulfill their responsibilities as unities of a society. Thus, trust between citizens is promoted.

The citizens take the risk to meet each other at their differences (on economic, cultural, ideological level). That way, a social network based on trust is created. This network promotes people to be socially active and aware of the fact that any activity in a social context is a political action. Taking responsibility for their social activity, the citizens no longer perceive the power relations as threatening. Instead, they can enter in a dialogic relationship with the state institutions and their representatives.

Trust is a creative process, like a dance. We improvise, seeking for coordination, and at some points we meet each other in an I-Thou mode of dialogue. As humans, we need to trust and at the same time we are afraid of being vulnerable. The way we cope with the tension created between these two, influences the way we change and our sense of happiness.

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