

“I Trust You!”

It was day 3 of a weeklong outdoor experiential program and we were getting lessons on how to climb straight up a mountain using a belay system. We were a group of ten and each one of us was assigned a captain to oversee the belay crew for our individual climb up the face of the mountain and back down again. None of us had ever belayed before and we were all a little nervous.

“Before we begin, I want each of you to pair up with your assigned captains,” shouted Christian, our instructor.

“Now I want each pair to stand facing each other and I want you to look into each others eyes.”

Okay, this is awkward, I thought.

He continued. “Keep in mind that you are about to put your life in the hands of the person standing directly in front of you. Now I need each of you to say out loud to the other, ‘I trust you!’ Only say it if you truly mean it!”



Fortunately for me, I had a good experience the previous two days with my partner, Mike, and had no problem looking him in the eyes and sincerely saying, “I trust you.”

Christian and the two other instructors carefully watched and listened to each pair.

Before Mike could return the “I trust you” to me, we both watched as Christian escorted Kelly and Jonathan over to a spot in the grass where he had them sit down. “Neither of you are going anywhere until you can talk through whatever it is that is preventing you from trusting each other.”

Just then Jeff and David were pulled from the group and told to do the same.

“Oh my God, what’s going on?” I whispered to Mike.

“You didn’t hear their argument last night?” he said, referring to Kelly and Jonathan. “It got pretty heated.”

“What about Jeff and David?” I asked rather curiously.

“David doesn’t trust anyone. That,” as he pointed over at the two, “isn’t about Jeff, it’s about David. It wouldn’t matter who his partner is.”

Christian and the other two instructors joined the two dyads sitting on the grass to help facilitate their discussions. The rest of us patiently waited, grateful that we were the observers and not the participants.

Reflections

Both Kelly & Jonathan and David & Jeff quickly worked through their trust issues with each other and we were all up and climbing shortly thereafter. I should mention that both pairs were highly motivated to resolve their differences and get climbing as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case, is it? Sometimes our motivation to resolve an issue isn’t as great as our desire to be right.

Trust is the foundation of every relationship yet rarely is it discussed until it’s broken. Maybe we should be addressing it now with the people we count on the most. Here are some questions to ponder:

Do you initially trust others or do they have to earn your trust first?

How important is trust in your relationships?

What do you do to create trust with others?

What would it take for trust to be broken in a relationship with you?

Think about the people in your life that you could literally stand in front of, with direct eye contact, and say, “I trust you.”

Who are those people and why do you trust them? And who are the people you don’t trust and why? Is it worth it to sit down with those people and talk through the trust issue? Perhaps it depends on what’s at stake if you don’t.

I’m a pretty trusting person outright. And yes, I’ve gotten burned a few times, but not enough to become distrustful. The bigger issue for me is defining what a trusting relationship means and sharing that with people. After all, how else will they know?

-Greg “Geese” Giesen