

## SESSION 25: Trust

### WELCOME

Welcome again to our course on realizing a life of love! It's good to be with you!

If you're new to this course, I strongly recommend that you review the first ten sessions because they make up the core foundation. You'll need this to benefit from the remaining sessions.

### SO LET'S GET STARTED

Again, as a reminder, the 3 As of awakening are *Attending*, *Appreciating*, and *Acting* with love. Attending leads to appreciation, which then leads to skillful loving action. Appreciation has two meanings, however: both understanding the nature of things and understanding the value or sacredness of Reality. Both of these aspects of appreciation arise from careful attending. Together, the twin practices of Attending and Appreciating, called “Appreciative Attending,” generate wisdom and reverence, which enable us to fulfill our purpose—to nurture and savor Life. Inspired by reverence for Life, we can then take *Action* to benefit all of Life—others and ourselves—with a loving heart, while enjoying each brief and precious moment of existence.

In our last session we discussed the practice of Tonglen. I hope you've had a chance to practice this healing practice for metabolizing pain this past week.

Today I will be discussing trust, both trusting ourselves and skillfully trusting others.

There are two aspects of trust. One is **trusting others**, and the other is **being trustworthy**.

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Trust is defined as **belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. It's a feeling followed by actions based on your trust.**

There are different kinds of trust. One is trust in other people, seeing that rational people will do what they perceive to be in their best interest. Fortunately, many people consider it in their best interest to treat you with consideration and fairness. When you trust others, you have confidence in them. You trust that you can depend on them to do what they say they will do. You trust that you won't be threatened, harmed, manipulated, or deceived. This includes trusting that you won't be judged harshly.

If your relationships are healthy, you trust that conflicts can be resolved in a healthy, respectful manner. With friends and family, there's the trust that they love you and care about you. When you have a trusting relationship, there are no secrets or lies.

**Trust in others involves being vulnerable and taking risks.** When you make yourself vulnerable, you trust that the other person won't take advantage of your vulnerability. Of course, this means you'll sometimes be disappointed or even betrayed because trust involves some risk, as you can't control other people's behaviors.

We trust, for example, that our spouse will be good to us and that we'll stay together for life. Unfortunately, roughly 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. Roughly 50 percent of men have affairs, while about 40 percent of women are also unfaithful. **Yet, trust allows us to connect and commit to one another despite the risks involved, all for the hope of benefit.**

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**Basic trust in others is developed in our first two years of life.** If you had reliable, loving caregivers, you likely developed a basic capacity to trust in others.

A special form of trust goes to healers and helpers, including mentors, coaches, doctors, and therapists. You trust that these people can help you, and you trust in the feedback of loving, wise people. This takes trust combined with humility.

Another form is **trust in yourself and your own innate goodness** and capacity to live a good life (with the help of others, of course). This is self-belief and trust that you can heal, grow, and change. It's trust in your capacity to survive, endure, and even thrive despite hard times.

You also **trust your own observations**, understanding about how the world works, **and your intuition**, as in trusting your “gut.” This can be difficult when everyone else disagrees with you, however, and you must face the possibility of rejection or even harm. This kind of trust requires courage.

There is also **trust in the laws of the Universe**, such as the belief that if you drop something, it will fall to the ground or that the sun will rise tomorrow. It's trust in the predictability of how the world works.

Another form of **trust is in governments, our institutions, the rule of law, and our way of life**. This might include trust in the democratic process or trust that our bank will keep our money safe for us. Many people trust that if they do their work well, they will be paid on payday. When we go out to dinner, the restaurant trusts that we'll pay our check when we finish our meal, and we trust that the restaurant will give us a meal that won't make us ill.

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When we pay for something, we trust that the cashier will give us back our change. If someone breaks a contract, we trust that the law will be on our side to right the wrong. When a bank loans us money, it trusts that we'll pay the loan back. These forms of trust are in reciprocity. If I give you something of value, you will give what you agree to give me in return.

Yet another kind of **trust is spiritual in nature**. This includes trust in the power of love and the essential goodness of Life and Reality. There is trust in virtues and principles such as honesty, fairness, justice, integrity, and benevolence. Spiritual trust includes a basic trust in karma: that if you put good out into the world, good will generally come back to you. Spiritual trust includes trust in the power of grace—the presence of a mysterious, loving, healing, benevolent force. The ancient poet Rumi called this a trust that the Universe is rigged in our favor. I've also heard it put that “the Universe has our back.” When you trust in grace, you trust that you can heal and have a happy life with the assistance, love, and support of others.

There is also the **trust that good eventually triumphs over evil**, and that in the long run, justice prevails. Then, there is the basic trust that love is better than hate. Some people, like people suffering from psychopathy, don't trust these universal spiritual principles. Instead, they believe it's every man for himself, that might makes right, and that ruthless competition is better than collaboration. They are blind to goodness, so they can't trust in it.

Trust is rarely absolute, however. You may trust your mail person to deliver the mail, but you may not trust them to take care of your home while you're away. Some people may only trust their therapist, revealing thoughts and feelings they wouldn't even share with their partner.

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Trust usually develops gradually over time. Most people take small steps toward trust, such as meeting a new person in a public place and getting to know them before inviting them to their home.

**Trust is based on a combination of prior experience, gut intuition, and conscious observation of behavior.** We're more likely to trust others when they act with integrity and walk their talk. You will trust people even more when you see them be trustworthy when no one is looking.

Trust can be broken by deceit or betrayal, and once broken it's difficult to restore. As they say, once burned, twice shy.

Trust is actually a skill. **To trust skillfully requires clear and careful observation of others.** You must be able to recognize any red flags that come up, such as when someone doesn't keep a promise or lies to you.

Ultimately, **trust is a choice to accept the risk of betrayal and be vulnerable in exchange for the benefits of trusting.** Because of the risk of harm, trust inevitably requires courage.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF TRUST

Your life couldn't happen without trust. It's the glue of life. You'd be frozen, paralyzed, unable to have relationships, and even unable to get out of bed in the morning.

We can't fully love or get anything done without it because we survive through collaboration. **Trust allows for harmonious, positive, and effective relationships.** It makes relationships less stressful and is essential for sustaining them.

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Because of trust, we can experience security, optimism, and peace of mind. It helps us be more open and connected with others, which is essential for genuine intimacy.

Mistrust, on the other hand, makes for stressful, chaotic, and dysfunctional relationships. It's miserable. You can't easily collaborate without at least some trust, and teams of people who trust each other perform better.

Socially, trust promotes economic prosperity, and higher levels of social trust boost economic development. Since corruption poisons trust, corrupt governments leave people less willing to collaborate.

Because we all inevitably hurt each other, trust helps to repair relationships, especially when we can trust that someone who hurt us genuinely feels bad and is truly committed to not harming us again. In this way, trust helps heal the hurt. **Trusting another person's basic goodness and good will helps us resolve conflicts and work out misunderstandings.**

When you trust someone, you respect their capacity to do what's right. It helps you give people time, space, and freedom, including the freedom to make mistakes and hopefully learn from those mistakes. No one loves perfectly, so people will break your trust. But you can still trust in most people's basic goodness, and you can trust that you and others can heal and move on.

**When you trust yourself, you're more confident.** Since a successful life involves taking risks, trusting in yourself helps you achieve success. It also **makes you happier, more likable, and more ethical.** The fruits of trust are love and joy.

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### LET'S DISCUSS THE BARRIERS TO TRUST

The main barrier to trust is the fear that someone will hurt you if you trust them. Sometimes, of course, this is justified. If someone hurts you, you may be right to not trust them again. If you're frightened of being vulnerable and taking risks, it can be difficult to trust.

If you grew up with unreliable, hurtful, or neglectful parents, you may not have a basic trust in your goodness or the goodness of others. Abuse and neglect can cause us to assume that everyone will betray us. Some wounded people have universal negative assumptions about themselves and others. They don't trust anyone or anything. **At the root of mistrust is a spiritual blindness to the basic goodness of most people and the basic goodness of Life.** You can't trust if you're globally paranoid. It's true that some people probably will hurt you if you let them, but not everyone.

When you lack trust like this, you automatically look for evidence to justify your beliefs. Someone I know was convinced his sister didn't love him and that he couldn't trust her because she didn't return just one of his phone calls. His woundedness blinded him to her goodness and love.

If you've been wounded and others haven't believed in you, it may be difficult to believe in yourself. You'll be likely to use mistakes and failures as evidence to justify your self-limiting beliefs, such as "I'm a failure" or "I never do anything right." Plus, if you aren't committed to acting with integrity, you won't be trustworthy. If you're self-centered, unreliable, dishonest, or judgmental, others will likely not trust you.

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If you've been betrayed, you may unconsciously try to trust untrustworthy people because that's all you've known and because you want to finally experience the trust you deserve. This is the same as loving people who are incapable of loving you back. Psychiatrists call this "repetition compulsion," which is an attempt to make past wrongs right. But if you trust untrustworthy people, it will further convince you that all people are untrustworthy.

We all have a yearning to trust, but this, too, can get us into trouble. If you just assume that everyone is trustworthy, you might look at people through rose-colored glasses. **Trusting skillfully requires caution and discernment**, which means you look closely at people for signs that they are trustworthy or untrustworthy.

You will also have difficulties trusting skillfully if you don't trust your gut. We all have an ability to know things without knowing how we know them. You may not understand why you feel uneasy around someone, but that's probably your intuition telling you something about them. Most people find they get into trouble when they don't listen to their gut intuition.

Some people manage their fear of being hurt by trying to control others. They may monitor their partner and isolate them from others. But attempting to control others isn't respectful or trusting. It poisons relationships and, again, comes from fear.

**Fear is often good and appropriate. But generalized fear without discernment of whom, when, and how we can reasonably trust will only poison our capacity for trust.**



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### LET'S DISCUSS HOW TO CULTIVATE TRUST

Trust is a skill developed through experience and practice. If you've been betrayed or were raised by untrustworthy parents, for example, see the past as the past. Don't generalize about people. Yes, not everyone can be trusted, but see the necessity and benefits of trusting. **Believe in your capacity to learn to skillfully trust.** See the present with fresh eyes not clouded by the past, and let the past teach you discernment so that you can see others more clearly.

So choose to be vulnerable for the benefits that skillful trusting will bring you, but do so with trustworthy people. The best way to find out if you can trust someone is to trust them a little bit at first by taking small, calculated risks. Give them the benefit of the doubt unless you see clear reasons not to. Then, trust those who prove to be trustworthy in small matters with bigger matters. **Trust the people who encourage you, treat you kindly, don't judge you, don't cling to you, respect your freedom, and believe what you say.**

Trust people to act in accordance with their own perceived self-interest, but look for people who know that it's in their best interest to love. You want to trust loving people.

**Watch people's behavior** closely for signs of trustworthiness. These signs include **open, transparent communication, authenticity, and the capacity to be vulnerable with you.** See if you can figure out their intentions. What do they do when no one is looking? Are they primarily motivated by love? This is a critical question.

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**Trustworthy people are considerate and loving, and they listen to you and make good eye contact.** They can admit when they're wrong, and they own up to their mistakes. They make amends, they keep their promises, and they're honest. Trustworthy people care for you, wish you no harm, and want your highest good. They put your needs and interests before or equal to their own.

**Compare what people say with what they do.** If they say, "I love you," see if they show it in their actions. Do they walk their talk? How do they treat you? Are they consistently there for you when you need them? Do they validate you? Are they loving? Do they show you respect?

Trustworthy people make you feel comfortable, and they're comfortable mingling with your friends and family.

Heed signs of danger like lies, broken promises, and secrets. **If you feel something is wrong, you're probably right.** Does someone leave you feeling uneasy? Do they hurt you? Do they leave you feeling confused? Don't let wishful thinking cloud your judgment. In the end, don't risk trusting people you sense may be untrustworthy. Trusting skillfully includes knowing when not to trust.

If you feel someone has violated your trust, talk about it with them to get clarity. Maybe there was a genuine misunderstanding. If you suspect betrayal, confront them as soon as possible. The short-term pain of that confrontation will bring long-term resolution and gain.

At the same time, hold others accountable for their behavior. (See the lesson on accountability). This helps others to be more trustworthy.

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Keep your private space private. Use care and caution in what you share with people you don't know well. But take the risk of being open, transparent, and vulnerable with your closest, trustworthy connections.

Building trust requires mutual commitment, so **invest in trusting people who can trust you back**. Then, create trust over time, moment by moment. Be patient with the process without rushing it.

If someone proves themselves to be untrustworthy, either end the relationship or set limits so that you won't be harmed anymore. If someone can't make authentic amends with a credible commitment to no further betrayal, it's likely best to sever contact. Remember that people don't usually change overnight. You've heard the saying, "The tiger doesn't change his stripes." People suffering from psychopathy, severe narcissism, or other severe personality disorders are especially unlikely to change. When you encounter these types of people, have compassion for them, but protect yourself.

In business and general social relationships, trust but verify. If someone says they'll do something, follow up to ensure they did it. Don't trust blindly; make sure there's a signed contract, and always read the fine print. If you're hiring someone, check reviews and references, and maybe even do a criminal background check. And remember: **if someone offers you an opportunity that is "too good to be true," it probably is.**

On the other hand, if you want others to trust you, you need to be trustworthy, which involves first purifying your intentions. Your primary intention must be to love. Then, put this intention into action in everything you say and do.

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See trust in you as a gift or a privilege that's given to you by someone else. Value and honor it as precious and sacred. Vow to yourself not to ever break someone else's trust if at all possible. Admit mistakes promptly, and try to repair relationships when you've harmed someone.

**You can cultivate trust in yourself through several practices.** One is your **stillness practice**. This will allow you to tap into your innate goodness and the goodness of life. You will awaken to the loving life force that lives through you. **Combine attending inward with attending outward.**

Look around you and see that there's grace, abundance, healing, love, and hope everywhere. Note that others much worse off than you have healed. So trust in your own resilience, and **use your daily affirmations to reinforce your trust in yourself**. As you awaken, you'll see that all is well, and all will be well. Trust in your dreams and what you feel called to do. As Wayne Dyer says, "You will see it when you believe it."

**Listen actively to others in order to build their trust in you. Keep your promises, show interest, be empathetic, walk your talk, and be honest.** Make your relationships your priority, and put others first without denying your own needs. Communicate authentically by being forthright in all of your dealings. If it's best for everyone, be appropriately open about what you're thinking, feeling, and doing, even if it's painful to do so. This will be liberating and will deepen connections.

**Resolve rifts and misunderstandings when they arise. If someone takes you into their confidence, keep their secrets.**

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Remember that to judge another person is to do violence upon them. Judging and harsh criticism will erode your partner's trust in their safety with you. So remain consistently supportive. If you do give feedback, do so kindly, remembering that truth without compassion is a weapon.

To be honest with others, you must first be honest with yourself. So practice radical self-reverence and wakeful awareness with a kind, accepting attitude of whatever is true for you. If you deceive yourself, you will then deceive others.

For people to trust you, you must respect their boundaries. Don't ask a coworker about their sex life, for example. Respect the space and privacy of others, and don't intrude or impose on them. If you fail to show consideration, people will be less likely to trust you.

Trust is the easiest thing in the world to lose and the hardest thing to get back. If you betray someone else, tell them right away, and make amends. Think of what's best for the other person. Again, the question is, "What would love do?"

## OUR NEXT SESSION

In our next session, we'll be discussing the skillful practice of assertiveness, in which we stand up for ourselves and ask for what we want and need from others.

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**In the meantime, between now and then, I encourage you to do the following:**

1. Continue your daily presence practice—both a period of silence, solitude, and stillness in the morning and your practice of stillness in motion through the day.
2. Start your day with a morning intention to love. You might want to recite a daily intention in the form of a prayer as in the dedication to love prayer in the meditations in the resource section of my website.
3. Practice appreciative attending. Inquire deeply into your experience with a kind, curious eye, especially if you're in pain. Ask, "what is this?" and affirm, "this is sacred." Continue to let go of negative judgments as they arise.
4. Review this lesson on Trust. Write in your journal about trust. What are the benefits of trusting for you? Do you trust yourself? If not, why not? Do you find it easy to trust others? What do you need to practice to increase your skills at trusting? How can you trust others and protect yourself at the same time?

**Please take some time after our session today to share your reflections with your fellow members of the WellMind community and to read what others have to say as well. Let us share and support each other in our exploration of love!**