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Saratoga County Board of Supervisors “Character First” Initiative: Trust

Steve Jobs is quoted to have said, “... you can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.” Trust permeates every aspect of human nature. However, it is a delicate trait that we embrace blindly.

Among many other things, trust is the basis of achievement and change. The ability to aim high and achieve one’s goals is rooted in a basic trust in oneself that you will not let yourself down, and trust in those around you that they will not drag you down. In order to make a change, you must have faith in the possibility of change – you must believe that your dots will connect themselves in a pattern that makes sense. The key to success lies in risking it all, while trusting that, one way or another, you will succeed in the end. By disguising itself as courage, trust becomes a universal requirement for personal and societal progress.

Therefore, logic would suggest that such an amazing quality would be in high demand. Yet one of the most remarkable aspects of trust is its intangibility. No one is able to buy trust off a shelf in the local grocery store or order it through an online catalogue. There is no instruction manual for connecting dots that cannot be seen. The person you are and the personality you exude makes you deserving of another’s trust, even when no one can ensure that you will connect the right dots. As a variation on a common saying may go, in order to be trusted, you must be the type of person you would trust.

With that said, every up has a down, and the downside of trust is its fragility. When you trust another person wholeheartedly, you have given an unknown part of yourself away, unprotected. You have made yourself vulnerable to someone else’s every wish and whimsy. This part of you is unadulterated – innocent in the finest sense of the word. What remains unknown or unrecognized is that this innocence can be exhausted in a matter of seconds. When attempting to connect your dots in a pattern that suits you, no matter how strong-willed you are, you will succumb to reality, and use your eraser at one point or another. A small mistake will not detract from the final image. On the other hand, veering off track for too long may result in irreparable damage. Eraser marks and small pencil lines will cover the previously blank page like scars, personally engraved reminders of how quickly trust became corrupted.

It is incredibly easy to lose another’s trust with one mistake. A wonderful relationship can be torn apart in the blink of an eye - ripped to pieces, and merely left there, broken. A minor misdirection may not have serious ramifications, and the damage could be ignored. More serious issues will arise, however, if the mistake was large enough to demolish someone’s trust. At this time, a breaking point has been reached, and invisible scars will develop. These scars will always be present, just as pencil lines incorrectly connecting life’s dots can never truly be deleted with an eraser.

Pain and scars serve as warnings for the human brain, reminders that harmful situations should be avoided at all costs in the name of survival. While unseen to the human eye, emotional scars heal no more efficiently than those on skin or paper, and are no less of a warning to the brain. In relation to trust, these warnings become a barrier. As soon as the trust between two people is broken, the damage is not easily repaired or forgotten. Both people leave the situation with unique scars, unable to ignore the events that occurred. While the issue will clear up with time, one person will remain hurt, and have difficulty trusting the one who caused their pain. No one would willingly put herself in harm’s way repetitively, but to regain someone’s trust, you must convince her to do exactly that. This is not an easy feat to accomplish, but it can be done. By demonstrating a caring personality, dedication to rebuilding a faithful relationship, and the will to put in the required effort, you may slowly move closer towards regaining trust and reconnecting the correct dots to have a successful relationship in the future.

While shrouded in complexity, trust is one simple trait that can lead to incredible relationships and happiness. Whether it is between parent and child, friends, or coworkers, “trust[ing] that the dots will somehow connect” between too people will always improve a partnership. If life can only be lived by connecting the dots behind you, trusting in something to connect them in your future could make a considerable difference in your life and the lives of those around you.