

BEING TRUSTWORTHY

Being trustworthy, or “worthy of trust”, is the key to building relationships. Without it, other people don’t know how to act around you, might be afraid of you, or don’t take you at your word. Here are some ideas about being trustworthy that can help build and strengthen relationships:

Being trustworthy is...	Examples
<p>Consistency: This means that others know what to expect from you. It means you are predictable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following through on what you say you are going to do • Showing compassion and caring even when someone is resistant or disrespectful • An even personality – not coming in one day very happy and angry the next. • Treating all people fairly • Respecting what is private and keeping things confidential
<p>Caring and Supportive: Showing that you truly care about people. It means you are respectful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking time to build relationships with different people • Using humor that is supportive rather than sarcastic • Protecting children and youth when they feel vulnerable or fragile
<p>Communicating Clearly: Being able to talk to many different people. It means you are open and honest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to what others have to say • NOT having hidden agendas (where you say or do one thing but mean another) such as telling children that there is only one snack for each person, but then sneaking more for yourself later. • Being upfront about having to report something as a mandated reporter
<p>Doing “with” rather than doing “to”: Seeing others as partners in the process. It means you are a facilitator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning activities and programs with input from children and youth. • Helping children and youth work through conflicts rather than taking care of the problem yourself • Asking if someone wants your help rather than assuming they do, even if they are struggling.
<p>People driven rather than ego-driven: Thinking about others. It means you are humble.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating accomplishments and successes of others. • Sharing the credit for getting things done. • Thanking people for their efforts. • Helping out and not expecting anything in return.
<p>Balancing high support and high challenge: Having high expectations and also treating people gently. It means you are compassionate and growth-oriented at the same time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child is scared and crying, comforting them rather than scolding them for bothering others. • If a youth calls someone a name, not ignoring it, but helping them think through how their words can hurt (even if they were “only joking”). • Holding children and youth to meeting their goals while helping them to meet their goals.
<p>Authenticity: Being real with people rather than being shallow and fake. It means being yourself as a professional.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating professional boundaries so that you show how children and youth can treat you. • Treating each child and youth as an individual. • Laughing with, and not at, others. • Being playful at times, and serious at other times, depending on what type of supervision is required.

It is important to remember that, as adults, we are held to a higher standard because children and youth have less experience learning how to interact with others. They need to learn how to work through issues, rather than be shut down by those with more authority. The best way to learn this is through experience, and we are people who can help them learn these skills.

Being trustworthy does not mean having to be perfect. We all make mistakes and sometimes have errors in judgment. The important thing is to be intentional – try to be trustworthy, and make it right when you are not. When someone feels let down because of something you say or do, you can mend the relationship by sitting down with them to talk it through. Many times taking responsibility for it, and showing that you are willing to make it right is enough to not only prove you are trustworthy, but strengthen the trust between you and the other person.

Sources: Tschannen-Moran, M. (2004). *Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools*. New York, NY: Jossey Bass Publishing, and Frank, L.S. (2004) *Journey Toward the Caring Classroom*. Oklahoma City, OK: Wood 'N' Barnes Publishing.

From: Gateways to Opportunity (2011). *Level 1 School-Age and Youth Development Credential: Training Curriculum, Participant Manual*. Springfield, IL: Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois Network for Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies, by Laurie S. Frank (pre-publication copy)