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TRUST

Trust is an important aspect of happiness not often paid attention to. Trust makes us feel good. It helps us get a long with others and enjoy new experiences. Trust lends itself to the development of a thriving social network. A lack of trust can interfere with the development of self-confidence and positive relationships.

There are volumes of books written about trust and the impact when something interferes with its development, but in a normal situation, here's basically what happens. Babies first learn if they can trust in the external world. If they are hungry, uncomfortable or upset, and their needs are met (they are fed or changed, or comforted) their brains begin to establish connections that say "the world is a safe and trustworthy place".

As children get older, they learn if others trust them. When a parent or someone else gives them a responsibility, asks for their help, or trusts them with a special item, they learn that others trust them, and their brains begin to establish connections that say "I am trustworthy".

These feelings of trust and trustworthiness soon become internalized, and the child begins to learn if he or she can trust themselves. Self-trust and knowing that you have the trust of others are important parts of healthy development, and has been shown to be a critical aspect in creativity and flourishing.

As adults, our level of self-confidence & ability to trust is impacted by these early experiences. There's not much we can do to turn back time and change our childhood, but recently some interesting studies have brought light to what is actually happening in the brain when we trust other people and when people trust us. And this lends clues to something we can do to build trust today.

Paul Zak, of Claremont Graduate University, conducted experiments which indicate that when someone trusts you, your brain releases a neurochemical called Oxytocin. Oxytocin is also a hormone released during breastfeeding as well as anytime there is caring physical contact. It's known as a "relax, and enjoy yourself" hormone. An increase in Oxtocin also makes you more

likely to trust someone else and be more generous toward others. Interestingly, Zak found that when someone is shown distrust, a rise in testosterone occurs, leading to a more aggressive response.

Trusting behavior has long been studied in human and animal societies and is seen as a critical factor in the successful establishment and maintenance of a healthy civilization. Zak's studies have also found that societies with a higher level of trust are more likely to be economically successful, while nations with low trust levels tend to be poor.

Evolution has given us the need and the ability to trust those around us, and also to use judgment about when that trust is warranted. When outright aggression isn't present, our hormones work on the side of trust. This, in turn, leads to benefit self, relationships and society.

Give someone a hug today and help release some Oxytocin in your and someone else's brain. Let yourself feel the pleasurable benefits of trusting and being trusted. There's a reason it feels good, and it's good for the world!

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