

# When You Don't Trust Your Own Judgment Anymore

After betrayal, you may stop trusting the person who betrayed you. That makes sense. What can be more surprising is discovering that you have also stopped trusting yourself. You make a decision and immediately reconsider it. Someone tells you something and you wonder whether you are being naïve. Something feels wrong and you wonder whether you are imagining it. Something feels right and you distrust that too. You replay conversations. Ask other people what they think. Look for reassurance. Gather more information than you need. Then gather a little more.



Eventually, the question is no longer only:

*Can I trust them?*

It becomes:

**Can I trust me?**

## Betrayal Can Turn Suspicion Inward

Someone else concealed something. Lied. Withheld information. Changed the agreement without telling you. Made decisions you did not know about. And somehow you end up in the witness box.

*How did I not know? Why did I believe them? Why didn't I see it? Why didn't I leave? Why didn't I ask more questions? What kind of person misses something like that?*

Notice what has happened. Another person's behavior has become evidence in a case against your judgment. That deserves examination.



## Being Wrong About Something Is Not the Same as Being Unable to Know Anything

You believed something that turned out not to be true. That matters. Perhaps you misjudged someone. Missed something. Ignored something. Perhaps information was deliberately concealed from you. Maybe all of those things happened. But there is an enormous distance between:

**I was wrong about this.**

and:

**I cannot trust my judgment.**

One is information about an experience. The other is a conclusion about your entire capacity to navigate reality. The evidence may not support that conclusion.

## You Made Decisions With the Information You Had

We keep returning here because betrayal makes this easy to forget. Your earlier self did not have today's information. She had what she knew then. Her experience. Her skills. Her resources. Her relationships. Her financial circumstances. Her emotional capacity. Her responsibilities. Her understanding of the situation. Her available options. Perhaps she made choices you would not make now. Of course she did.

**You are evaluating her with resources she acquired partly by surviving what she had not yet survived.**

That is not a fair comparison.

## Capacity Matters Too

Sometimes we focus entirely on information.

*If only I had known.*

But even if you had known more, what could you realistically have done? Perhaps you were raising children. Caring for someone. Financially dependent. Ill. Exhausted. Working full-time. Grieving another loss. Without support. Living somewhere with limited options. Or simply lacking experience you have now. Human beings do not make decisions as disembodied intellects presented with perfect choices. We decide from inside actual lives. Understanding your former choices requires remembering the life in which they were made.

## Options Matter

Looking backward, alternatives can appear obvious.

*I should have left.*

Gone where? With what money? To what job? With which children? With what information? With whose support? Perhaps leaving really was possible.

Perhaps you wish you had. That can be true. But sometimes hindsight quietly invents options that did not exist in the form we imagine them now. Before judging an earlier decision, it can help to ask:

**What choices did I actually believe were available to me then?**

Not the choices available today. Not the choices someone else had. Not the choices you wish had existed. The ones you could actually see.



## You May Have Trusted Because Trust Was Reasonable

This can be difficult to accept afterward. Perhaps the person had been trustworthy for twenty years. Perhaps there was no obvious reason to investigate. Perhaps they offered a plausible explanation. Maybe the relationship itself included an expectation of honesty. You believed them. After betrayal, that belief may feel humiliating. But trust is not necessarily evidence of poor judgment. Sometimes trusting someone who has repeatedly behaved as though they are trustworthy is perfectly reasonable. The fact that they later violate that trust does not retroactively make trusting them irrational.

## Perhaps There Were Warning Signs

We don't need to protect you from this possibility either. Maybe there were things you noticed. Questions you didn't pursue. Behavior you rationalized. Boundaries you allowed to move. Perhaps someone warned you. Maybe you knew something felt wrong.

There may be important information there. Self-trust does not require telling yourself:

*I did everything perfectly.*

In fact, that would make self-trust fragile. You can say:

**I see something now that I wish I had taken more seriously then.**

That is learning. It does not have to become condemnation.

## Self-Trust Is Not Believing You Will Never Be Wrong

This may be the most important distinction. If self-trust means:

*I will always accurately judge every person and situation,*

none of us qualifies.

Human beings misunderstand. Misremember. Trust people who disappoint us. Make poor decisions. Change our minds. Miss information. Sometimes we are deceived. Sometimes we simply get things wrong. Self-trust cannot reasonably mean guaranteeing perfect judgment.

Perhaps it means something sturdier:

**I trust myself to remain in relationship with reality, including when reality tells me I was wrong.**

## You Can Change Your Mind Without Betraying Yourself

Perhaps you once believed:

*This person is trustworthy.*

Now the evidence has changed. So your judgment changes. That is not proof that your judgment failed. In some ways, it is proof that it is functioning. You received new information. You updated your understanding. That is what sound judgment does.

You are not required to defend yesterday's conclusion against today's evidence in order to prove you were competent yesterday.

**Changing your mind when reality changes is a form of self-trust.**



## You May Begin Outsourcing Decisions

After betrayal, other people's certainty can feel comforting. What do you think? Would you trust them? Am I overreacting? What would you do? Does this seem suspicious? Should I stay? Should I leave?

Advice can be useful. Other people can see things we cannot. But notice if consultation gradually becomes permission. You no longer ask for perspective. You ask someone else to decide what reality means for you. That can feel safer.

If they're wrong, at least you weren't wrong again. But eventually self-trust requires your return to the room.

### **Other People Can Help You See. They Cannot See for You.**

A trusted friend. A professional. A group. A teacher. Someone who has lived through something similar. They may help enormously. They can notice patterns. Ask questions. Offer information. Challenge assumptions. Help you slow down. But ultimately, you live inside the consequences of your decisions. Support should help strengthen your ability to participate in judgment. Not replace it.

## You May Start Requiring Certainty Before Acting

This is another understandable response. You were surprised once. Never again. So now you need to know. Completely. Before deciding. You research. Wait. Check. Ask. Recheck. Consider every possible outcome. Perhaps one more piece of information will finally make the decision safe. But certainty is rarely available. Eventually most decisions contain some amount of:

*Based on what I know now, this seems right.*

That may feel terribly inadequate after betrayal. It is also how human beings have always made decisions.

## Vigilance Can Feel Like Wisdom

After betrayal, you may become very good at watching. Tone of voice. Facial expressions. Phone placement. Changes in routine. Words that don't quite match. Who talked to whom. Tiny inconsistencies. And some of that attention may genuinely protect you. You have learned things. But vigilance and discernment are not identical.

Vigilance says:

**Something may be wrong. Keep looking.**

Discernment asks:

**What does the available evidence actually support?**

One keeps the alarm running. The other evaluates what is happening.

## Your Feelings Are Information, Not Verdicts

Perhaps something feels wrong. Pay attention. But a feeling does not always tell you what is wrong. Fear can mean danger. It can also mean memory. Anger can identify injustice. It can also arise from misunderstanding. Relief can tell you something important. So can discomfort. You do not need to ignore feelings. Nor do you need to make them solely responsible for determining reality.

You can ask:

*What am I feeling? What might that be telling me? What else do I know?*

That is not distrusting yourself. It is using more of yourself.



## You May Need to Learn the Difference Between Intuition and Fear

This can take time. After betrayal, almost everything may feel like a warning. A delayed text. A changed plan. Someone wanting privacy. A new friendship. An unfamiliar tone. Your nervous system has evidence now that unexpected things can happen. Of course it pays attention. You don't need to shame yourself for that. But neither does every alarm require evacuation.

Sometimes you can notice:

*Something in me is afraid.*

And then look. What is actually happening?

## Your Judgment May Already Be Working Better Than You Think

Consider what you are doing now. You recognized something happened. You are reconsidering information. You are asking questions. Distinguishing what you know from what you don't. Reevaluating assumptions. Thinking about responsibility. Noticing what you would do differently. That is judgment. It may feel messy because the situation is messy. But uncertainty is not the same as incompetence.

## Sometimes good judgment sounds like, “I don't know yet.”

### You Can Learn Without Making Yourself the Lesson

Perhaps there are things you want to change. Ask the second question. Check the account. Speak sooner. Pay attention when words and behavior diverge. Maintain financial independence. Protect confidential information differently. Take discomfort seriously. Set a boundary earlier.

Good.

Those are useful lessons. But notice the difference between:

*I learned to pay attention to this.*

and:

*I learned that I am a person who cannot be trusted.*

Only one of those lessons helps you navigate the future.

## Self-Trust Includes Compassion for the Person You Were

Not indulgence. Not historical revision. Compassion. She was working with what she had. Information. Capacity. Experience. Skills. Money. Support. Options. Perhaps she was doing remarkably well. Perhaps she made mistakes. Perhaps both. But she was not a character in a movie ignoring the ominous soundtrack while the audience shouted at the screen. There was no soundtrack. She was inside the scene. Living it.

**She deserves to be judged from where she stood, not from where you stand now.**

## You Can Stop Cross-Examining Her

Perhaps you have asked enough. Why didn't you know? Why did you stay? Why did you believe that? Why didn't you do something?

Maybe some questions produced useful answers. Keep those. But eventually the cross-examination may stop producing information. It only produces guilt. You can release your former self from the witness stand. She cannot change her testimony. She cannot go back. She cannot make the choice she did not know she needed to make. But you can listen to what her experience taught you. And then let her rest.



## Self-Trust Happens in the Present

You cannot prove today that your judgment was perfect ten years ago. You don't need to. Self-trust is rebuilt here. You notice something. Ask a question. Gather appropriate information. Make a decision. Watch what happens. Adjust. Sometimes you will be right. Sometimes you will discover something you didn't know. Sometimes you will change course. Each time you remain willing to respond to reality rather than defend yourself against it, you practice self-trust.

## You Do Not Have to Promise Yourself That Nobody Will Ever Betray You Again

You can't. This may be one of the hardest realities. Perfect discernment cannot make relationships risk-free. You could become wiser. More experienced. More attentive. Better at boundaries. And another person could still deceive you.

Self-trust cannot be built on the promise:

*I will never let this happen again.*

Because another person's behavior is not entirely yours to control. Perhaps the promise can be different:

**If reality changes, I will not abandon myself in order to preserve the story I wanted to be true.**

That is something you can practice.

## You Are Allowed to Trust Slowly

You do not need to become trusting again on anyone else's schedule. Not because somebody apologized. Not because a new person is "nothing like them." Not because someone tells you you're guarded. Trust can develop through evidence. Consistency. Time. Words matching behavior. Boundaries being respected. Repair when something goes wrong. You are allowed to watch reality accumulate. That is not bitterness. It may simply be wisdom.

## You Are Also Allowed to Trust Yourself Before You Trust Someone Else

Perhaps this is where recovery begins.

Not:

*I know this person will never hurt me.*

But:

*I know I can pay attention. I can ask questions. I can tolerate information I don't like. I can change my mind. I can seek help. I can make a decision. I can survive being wrong. I can respond when reality changes.*

That is a very different kind of security. It does not depend on another person's perfection.



## Self-Trust Is Not Certainty

It is relationship. A relationship with yourself. A relationship with reality. You listen. Notice. Question. Learn. Correct. Respond. Forgive yourself for being human. Try again. Perhaps that is why betrayal can damage self-trust so profoundly - and why rebuilding it matters so much. The goal is not to become the woman who can never be fooled again. That woman would have to spend her life investigating everyone. The goal is to become increasingly confident that whatever reality reveals, **you will remain available to it**. You may misjudge someone again. You may miss something. You may make a decision you later regret. That is part of being human. But being wrong does not require abandoning yourself.

Perhaps self-trust sounds less like:

*I know.*

and more like:

**I can find my bearings again.**

### CONTINUE THE SERIES

## Next: Anger, Grief, Love, and the Emotions That Don't Seem to Belong Together



Betrayal can produce emotions that seem to contradict one another. You may love someone and be furious with them. Miss them and feel safer without them. Want an apology and never want to speak to them again. Feel grief, relief, anger, tenderness, humiliation, longing, and hope - sometimes in the same afternoon.

Next, we'll look at why emotional contradiction after betrayal does not mean you are confused about what happened. It may mean you're responding honestly to something complicated.