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Once burned, twice shy? You can learn to trust on job again

By **Anita Bruzzese**, Gannett

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Do you trust anyone at work? Your co-worker? Your CEO?

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If you're not exactly ready to shout your undying trust in any of the above, you're not alone.

The past several years have eroded trust in many phases of our lives, including the workplace. Difficult times that have caused layoffs, downsizings, mergers and led to a more stressful, demanding workplace have hardly led to most of us joining

hands and singing *Kumbaya*.FOR BOSSES: [Trust can go a long way with workers](#)MORE ON THE JOB: [Anita Bruzzese's column index](#)

The problem is that as the economy begins to improve and companies ramp up their competitive efforts, employees can remain stuck in neutral: They can't move on because they can't forget painful experiences or the times their trust was broken. If they can't move on, it not only hurts a company's ability to thrive but the employees' careers, say Dennis and [Michelle Reina](#), co-founders of the [Reina Trust Building Institute](#) who have advised clients such as [American Express](#) and [Walt Disney World](#). When an employee's trust has been damaged, Michelle Reina says it can affect all areas of that person's life. The individual may become depressed, angry and bitter not only at work, but at home.

"It eats at their life force. It becomes very depleting," she says.

One of the most stressful things many people have had to deal with is loss of a job. Michelle Reina says that when someone loses a job, it is often the loss of relationships — with a boss or co-workers — that can become the most distressing aspect for the person.

Still, she says you can learn to cope.

"While you can't control losing your job, you can control how you respond to it. If you choose the pathway of healing and renewal, then you acknowledge your loss and the impact it has had on you," she says. "If you fail to do that, then you have the posture of a victim. You get hung up on what was done to you, what role others have played.

And you don't look at what you can do to rebuild. You become stuck."

Or, as [Dennis Reina](#) says, you begin "copping an attitude," believing that "the world owes" you something.

"Instead of the person thinking about what he or she could attain or learn from what has happened, they start looking at the glass as half empty. They develop an attitude of entitlement," Michelle Reina says.

In their book, [Rebuilding Trust in the Workplace](#), (Berrett-Koehler, \$19.95), the Reinas talk about the seven steps for healing, which include finding support during a difficult time, taking responsibility for the part you may have played in a bad experience and determining what you might have done differently.

The final step, called "let go and move on" seems to be especially difficult for many of today's workers, they say.

Even if someone finds another job after being unemployed, that person can't get past the hard feelings of being let go.

Or, an employee may feel betrayed by a boss when a promotion goes to someone else.

"Letting go and moving on does not mean that you have to settle for less," Michelle Reina says. "But you muster up the courage for healing, and you may find something that can be even greater than you imagined."

They suggest to let go you must:

- **Accept what has happened.** If you were fired, accept what has happened without blaming someone else, being judgmental or feeling shame.

"Letting go is like cleaning out your closet and actually throwing the junk away instead of just moving the stuff to another room in your house," Dennis Reina says. By letting go, you're regaining the power you may have given away when you felt betrayed.

- **Ask questions.** If you're still having trouble with shame or blame, Michelle Reina says consider what needs to be said or done to put the issue behind you once and for all. For example, you may need to get additional support if you worry the situation could happen again. Or if you're still feeling powerless, determine whether you've really taken responsibility for your part in a situation.

- **Be understanding.** "You know that you are ready to move on when you are able to reflect on the experience and feel that sense of inner peace," Michelle Reina says. "If you have truly let go, you have feelings of gratitude for the other people involved."

The Reinas emphasize that moving on doesn't mean you forget what happened. They say that difficult experiences — such as losing a promotion — can be a learning experience and even help you become more appreciative of other things in your life.

You may see things in a new way, experience new sensations and be more open-minded — all things that can help you form new, rewarding relationships.

[Anita Bruzzese](#) is author of "45 Things You Do That Drive Your Boss Crazy ... and How to Avoid Them," [www.45things.com](#). [Click here](#) for an index of *On the Job* columns. Write to her in care of Gannett ContentOne, 7950 Jones Branch Drive, McLean, VA 22107. For a reply, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.For more information about [reprints & permissions](#), visit our FAQ's. To report corrections and clarifications, contact Standards Editor [Brent Jones](#). For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to [letters@usatoday.com](#). Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to [corrections.usatoday.com](#).

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