



CHOOSE COURAGE

**In Your
Relationships**

Empower Yourself First

Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D.

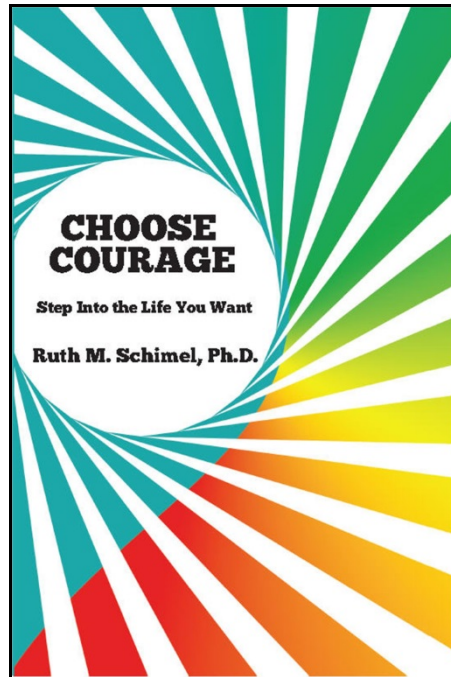
Choose Courage

In Your Relationships: Empower Yourself First

by Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D.
Career & Life Management Consultant

**DON'T MISS THIS GROUNDBREAKING BOOK THAT
PROVIDES THE FOUNDATION FOR THE HANDBOOKS**

Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want



**by Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D.
Career & Life Management Consultant**

**Available at www.amazon.com or through
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In Paperback and Kindle editions

ISBN: 13:149034303

[Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want](#)

ACCLAIM FOR CHOOSE COURAGE

We are in the era where individuals can express who they are, what they believe in, what they seek, and where to move forward as never before across most of the globe.

Technology has enabled and empowered the ability to have a platform to express your opinion (from Tweets to blog posts, to other means). Thus the timely publication of the Dr. Ruth Schimel's new book entitled "Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want" is ideal to guide individuals to not only pursue their dreams but also to realize them.

Choose Courage offers a unique set of guidelines that is sensitive to the individual reader and allows everyone to tailor the recommendations to their own set of circumstances. Most "How to Books" dictate with a lofty set of rules and principles to the reader for the pathway to success. Dr. Schimel offers a positive, manageable, and realistic process.

Choose Courage is an outstanding life map that guides a range of individuals from business leaders to elementary teachers to exhibit their courage and to use their respective talents without boundaries, without fear.

Dr. Hubert Glover, Drexel University, Author of Giraffes of Technology: The Making of the 21st Century Leader

USE AND BENEFITS OF CHOOSE COURAGE

***Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want* transforms what could be a heroic cliché into concrete ways you can realize your true capacities. Based on doctoral-level research with everyday people, the book provides a 21st century definition of courage. The array of tools and guidance will help you build on your strengths and skills as well as transcend emotional barriers. Photos, art, humor, and poetry will also inspire your continuing action.**

The design of *Choose Courage* echoes the dynamism of life. Like the blended, spontaneous nature of jazz, this interactive book uses a range of disciplines to support fresh ideas and menus of processes; weave them into what you want and need. Since the approach reflects the incremental nature of actual progress, take the small steps in whatever order makes sense to you. Or use the sequence offered. You'll be prompting your own potential and useful contributions from and to others.

Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D.
Career & Life Management Consultant
202.659.1772
www.ruthschimel.com ruth@ruthschimel.com

Use your good judgment, intuition, intellect, and common sense as you apply and adapt suggestions and guidance from this handbook.

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Cover graphic by Blen Getahun, www.blengdesign.com

ISBN-13:978-1511523189

ISBN-10: 1511523182

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DEDICATION

This handbook is offered with appreciation to my clients and readers, as well as to my collaborator and production editor, Kathleen Sindell, Ph.D.
(www.kathleensindell.com)

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INTRODUCTION TO GUIDES FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

CHOOSE COURAGE

In Your Relationships: Empower Yourself First

INTRODUCTION

The most important relationship you have in life is the one you have with yourself. And then after that, I'd say once you have that, it may be hard work, but you can actually design your life.

~ Diane von Furstenberg, designer, author, and entrepreneur ~

Courage is the process of being willing to realize your true capacities by going through discomfort, fear, anxiety, or suffering and taking wholehearted, responsible action.

~ Ruth M. Schimel, Ph.D., career & life management consultant, author, trainer, speaker~

START WITHIN YOURSELF FIRST

You may open your windows inward or outward. When adjustable in other ways, you can also raise, lower, or crack them. Keep this metaphor in mind as you use this first handbook on relationships. It focuses on you, making good decisions based on your best judgment. Your powers and values also reside within. All these capacities can help extend and deepen connections with people who are important to you in professional and personal situations.

Typical of *Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want*, the series of handbooks that complement it also offer inspiring, manageable steps adaptable to various situations in your life. They are designed to honor realities, providing ways to influence the process of creating a life you want in ways that work for you given the time you have.

As you act authentically with others, you'll likely bring lasting benefits and outcomes that have meaning for you. Given the complexity and range of connections in most lives, opportunities occur with couples, friends, and families as well as with people at work, in community groups, and cultures beyond your own.

RELATIONSHIPS AND COURAGE

Whether immediately obvious or not, all four underlying themes in the research-based, 21st-century definition of courage at the start of this handbook and following relate to the themes you'll find here. *Courage is the process involving the willingness to realize your true capacities by going through discomfort, fear, anxiety, or suffering and taking wholehearted, responsible action.*

The spiritual or soulful aspect of willingness and being wholehearted animates and inspires your outreach to others. The emotional process of moving through realities of discomfort, fear, anxiety, or suffering gives forward thrust and releases energy for that outreach. Intellectual means of realizing your true capacities contribute to self-knowledge, analysis of situations, and synthesis of information. And the ethical component of responsible action girds and adds meaning to what you actually do, improving trust, flow, and cooperation.

As you likely know from experience, the process of opening and connecting to others requires investment of yourself first, within reason of course. Since little of value can be accomplished entirely on one's own, as the initiator you can at least begin to design your approach. Crucial to reaching out and following up is building mutual trust.

MEANINGS AND SOURCES OF TRUST

The noun "trust" derives from Scandinavian words related to protection, firmness, and consolation. The Gothic *trausti* meant covenant. In today's world, trust is the foundation for a range of relationships, including personal, professional, communal, spiritual, and civic.

"Trust" as a verb expresses other possibilities — the opportunity to hope, to make a leap of faith about a person, group, institution, or situation. One dictionary definition includes to:

- rely, depend
- be confident, hope
- believe
- place in the care of another
- grant discretion or confidentiality

Creating trust through interaction not only contributes to healthy work and love, but also can offset fear. As poet Marge Piercy says, "*The waters of trust run as deep as the river of fear through the dark caverns in the bone.*"

To test these associations, think about a situation you've experienced in which the presence of trust contributed to a better outcome. If you wish, jot down below a few aspects of the process of building trust that you remember.

CREATING AND SUSTAINING TRUST

As one of the best bargains available, well-founded trust can be free and flowing. Once the sluice gates to mutual comfort are opened by paying attention, being forthright, and acting with integrity, a river of good will generates energy. You'll also experience continuing benefits and pleasures.

There is challenge, though. As with any investment of longer-term value, building trust involves work, risk, and good judgment. Many of the choices — how, where, when, and with whom you develop it — remain in your hands.

You've no doubt already noticed the good outcomes that often emerge from small steps that accrue over time. They may be as modest as showing empathy in a particular

situation or calling in advance when you'll be late.

On a more holistic level, these two ways to create and sustain trust can enrich your life directly. First, continue clarifying in the depth that makes sense to you who you are and who you want to be as encouraged in *Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want* and elsewhere. The authenticity, passion, commitment, and vocation discussed in the book can support your credibility, often attracting trust and respect from others.

Second, stay alert to how you want to and actually relate to people you value already and those you may come to appreciate. That could include time devoted, activities shared, listening well, and assisting with matters of mutual or individual interest. Develop opportunities for new connections with meaning to you as well.

Even in transitory situations such as waiting on line or receiving services, communicating thoughtfully or playfully with new people may bring mini-adventures. For example, I often notice from their appearance that many taxi drivers, waiters, and check out people seem to be students; then I may ask them what they're studying which can lead to a brief or interesting chat.

In addition to immediate practical results, these processes themselves can generate continuing benefits for your personal and professional life. Acting in trustworthy ways contributes to predictability and generally elicits similar behaviors from others. Along the way, those experiences contribute to your own confidence and progress. You'll increase self-respect and daily enjoyment. So trust strengthens you as well as your relationships.

Yet few of these internal and external advantages emerge from the quick fix of one isolated effort. Nor do your actions occur in a vacuum. For example, you've probably felt the tension between honoring your own needs and preferences and the varying demands of being a member of a family, work group, community, culture, and country. Mundane examples could be acceding to a partner's preference over yours or conforming to a neighborhood norm of cleaning a sidewalk when you have other priorities.

By considering such a tension an opportunity to stretch rather than a stressor, you may come up with a creative way to serve seemingly contradictory needs. You might hire a neighborhood youth to clean the sidewalk instead of taking precious time and energy to do it yourself. Or barter services for a win-win outcome that does not involve money. With your partner, possibly explore where fairness and common interests lie or can be created in sharing activities and responsibilities.

Address any of the ways below to stay present with and accessible to others. Also improve and adjust them to your prime values and interests, as addressed in *Choose Courage: Step Into the Life You Want* and other sources of inspiration and guidance.

Within yourself:

CHOOSE COURAGE RELATIONSHIPS: EMPOWER YOURSELF FIRST

Increase clarity about what's truly important to you; the fewer the choices the easier to focus and take action. To start, jot down below your two or three top values:

Specify two priorities that influence present choices and relate to what you want to accomplish for the foreseeable future:

Organize yourself to be on time in communication and actions; when unable to do so, give others as much notice as possible. Apologize for lapses, as appropriate. To refresh your habits, briefly describe below a few ways you can add flexibility to arrive a little early or on time:

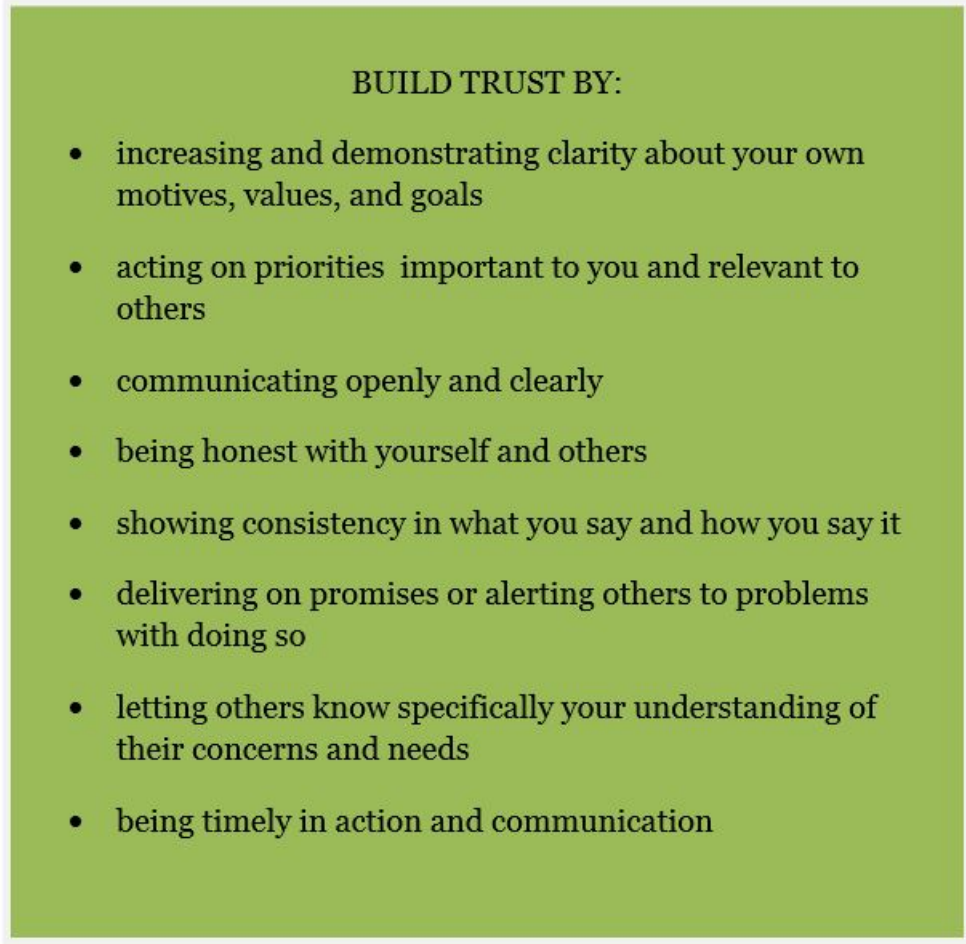
In regard to a few people you cherish and trust, imagine how you will act on the following:

- Be as transparent as possible about your motives.
- Communicate in straightforward ways about important issues.
- Be consistent in significant actions, including what you say as well as nonverbal communication and tone of voice. (See guide on Effective Listening.)

For follow through: Describe below specifically one action, in relation to any of the previous three bullets that you will take with a person you name:

You probably know of other ways to create trust from the inside out through your own behavior. If some or most approaches suggested here or that you're considering seem inaccessible for now, adapt one or two aspects to at least launch yourself. Then you'll avoid postponing action into oblivion. Experiment with a variety of processes to build connections that nurture yourself and others for fun and stimulation. See what works and satisfies. Figure 1.0 shows ways to build trust.

Figure 1.0 Building Trust



THE VALUE OF BEING THE FIRST ONE TO TRUST

When you start or improve the process of building trust instead of waiting, perhaps forever, for the other person to make a move, you'll retain choice and influence. Though you can't force anyone to trust you, then at least you'll create an environment for them to do so through your own actions. Your outreach could also test the good will of the other person.

CHOOSE COURAGE RELATIONSHIPS: EMPOWER YOURSELF FIRST



You have the strength to overcome barriers to trust.

Your intuition about making an initial leap of faith with a particular person, coupled with your own willingness, provide a good start. Attend to and use the true voice that emerges from your thoughts and emotions.

Assuming someone is worth a reasonable risk, you can start dealing the cards, so to speak, with some small steps that show your good will. As trust develops and deepens through interaction over time, your choices can let additional light in through the windows that give further access to possibilities within you both.

Whether linear and logical or not, the process will benefit from effective behavior modeling that supports:

- quicker, engaging, natural flow of communication due to spontaneous, authentic actions
- enhanced quality of your connections because opportunities for improvement are addressed directly instead of avoided or discussed in half-baked ways for fear of offending
- need to remember less about what was said to whom and under what circumstances
- productive, engaging experiences with better outcomes because appropriate powers are used

- increased fun and pleasure because you and others are enjoying yourselves

You'll also improve other aspects of the quality of your life because:

- time and energy will be used more efficiently as clearer priorities help focus choices and action
- the firm foundation of trust helps ward off discomfort, fear, anxiety, and other negative or draining emotions
- unanticipated benefits through effective collaboration can emerge

To encourage your follow through, jot down below:

One person or situation that warrants reasonable efforts to improve trust:

One specific action you'll initiate to promote trust:

One realistic outcome you could expect and why:

An alternative action, if your approach does not work out:

How you will acknowledge to yourself any progress:

Now that you've thought through what you will do, actually schedule one to three specific, related steps on your calendar over the next few weeks. And don't forget to reward yourself for any progress.

DANGERS OF TRUSTING

As you have seen already, almost nothing important that involves human relationships remains static. In personal and professional situations, individuals struggle with issues, make progress, and sometimes regress. Political, social, and economic environments influence behavior as well. A resulting lack of predictability may jiggle or disrupt comfort zones. Yet such variability holds opportunities as well as challenges and occasional seemingly scary surprises.

In the public realm, where complexity is even greater, there are many reasons to distrust and needs for renewal of trust. A new head of the then beleaguered Red Cross recognized that "We have to add to that trust account on a daily basis."

Though the phrase "cooking the books" emerged in 1636, corporate and accounting manipulations continue today, likely on grander scales. A recent chief of the Securities and Exchange Commission, started in the 1930s to thwart insider trading, self-dealing, and exploitation of investors, was disgusted with today's similar "shenanigans." Optimistically, he vowed to wipe them out. The Catholic Church still faces the continuing scandals of some priests' betrayals of trust, despite Pope Francis' interest in addressing the situation.

However indiscriminate, general distrust of government and its representatives seems rampant among a range of individuals and groups. In addition, exposure of fragile aspects of the current financial system and difficulty moderating its underlying issues contribute to wondering when the next shake up will occur. The vulnerability of the Internet and its uses to hacking is another issue.

If institutions appear dicey, some individuals who have power in public and private life have been proven to lie, lead on, manipulate information, hide true feelings behind polite facades, and camouflage reality. These are many of the typical behaviors that make trusting difficult, if not risky.

Even seemingly benign situations can implode. That happens especially when avoiding conflict rather than working to resolve or ameliorate it. Just hoping things will evolve or magically blow over postpones dealing with issues that could be improved or at least addressed openly when it's worthwhile to do so. One way to start is to put pessimism and suspicions aside temporarily in favor of using listening skills discussed in this handbook's guide, *Effective Listening*. Without formal power or extensive resources, these skills can help you move past barriers of many kinds.

AVOIDING THE DANGERS OF TRUSTING

As appropriate, making a well-founded, small leap of faith implicit in creating and sustaining trust is generally a better alternative to sinking in a mire of indirection, stasis, or distrust. The specious comfort of conflict avoidance is a poor substitute for the

many positive reasons for trusting listed earlier on pages seven and eight. Though you can't control your environment or others, you can influence them through what you stand for, what you say, and what you do.

To protect yourself from the dangers that come with naive or uncritical leaps of faith or trusting that a desired outcome will emerge from just your own good will, consider, adapt, and add to the following. The choices may also increase your effectiveness and opportunities. Within yourself:

- Listen to your intuition about someone or a situation. While sometimes suspect because it seems to come from nowhere, that sense is often well-founded.
- Lengthen your antenna for identifying insincerity, manipulation, cant, lies, and absurdity. Avoid such people whenever possible.
- Use critical thinking, or purposeful reflective judgment, to support your effective action.
- Develop and express your sense of humor to lighten the load, retain perspective, and show your charm. (This does not include sarcasm, putdowns, or making fun of others that some people consider humorous.)
- Pay attention to and develop further your emotional and social intelligences. (Daniel Goleman has written on both, but you may also Google similar subjects to go beyond what you know already.)

Ways to confirm your intuition include:

- checking out main proposed choices and relationships that are important to you with people who merit your trust and respect
- testing with others your specific expectations, keeping them reasonable and your own efforts consistent with meeting them
- doing some small tests of trustworthiness such as requesting something simple by a particular time rather than jumping into a situation or relationship with both feet
- avoiding, as much as possible, people who are mean-spirited, sneaky, ungenerous, jealous, insecure, and/or self-absorbed as well as anyone who drains your energy. You'll know who they are when you consistently feel tired, stressed, discombobulated, or anxious after spending time with them.

CHOOSE COURAGE RELATIONSHIPS: EMPOWER YOURSELF FIRST

- practicing your conflict resolution skills, using them when the situation and people merit the time and energy. (Among many sources, are *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Without Giving In* and *Getting Together: Building Relationships As We Negotiate*, and *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*)

Now, to make sure you continue moving away from danger, review any major past mistakes in trusting to identify patterns you don't want to repeat or need to adjust. Briefly remind yourself of a few experiences that may have unnecessarily exposed your vulnerabilities or created detours from what you wanted. Then make a **short personal alert list of main characteristics of the patterns to protect yourself in the future**. The list may include considerations such as:

- types of or particular situations you want to avoid
- types of or particular people who could be counterproductive, time eaters, or dangerous
- your motivations that did not work out for you
- your actions that are not useful to repeat
- main tendencies you may have that could thwart or sabotage good outcomes

Indicate below one or two specific situations and behaviors for immediate attention and modification:

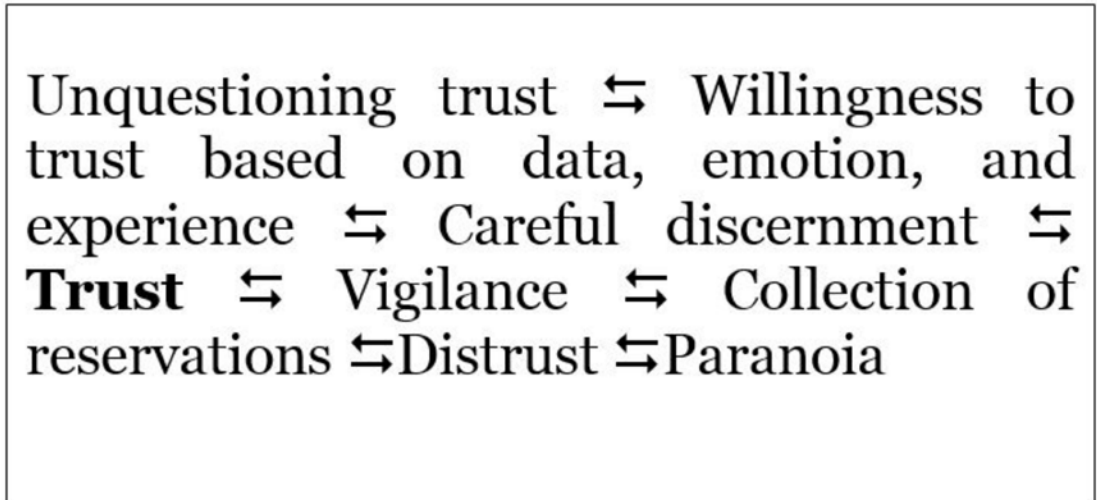
A CONTINUUM OF TRUSTING

Just as trust itself brings opportunities for creating a better life, the processes for avoiding the dangers of trusting will contribute to the quality of daily existence. As with other situations, there can be ebbs and flows of experiences with trust, varying with your confidence, expertise, and circumstances, not to mention others' behavior. But eventually better levels can be reached with attention, practice, good judgment, and reasonable risk.

I hope the continuum of trust shown in Figure 1.1 will keep you alert to a range of related attitudes, behaviors and their connections to one another. You may experience a

range of them over time and some concurrently within certain relationships.

Figure 1.1 Flows of Trust



At any point along this continuum, you may encounter dangers and opportunities. The challenge involves using appropriate insight and behaviors for particular situations. For example, that could include careful discernment and trust as well as vigilance.

BUILDING ON WHAT YOU KNOW

You already have useful experience with creating and sustaining trust as well as from making some mistakes. The latter can be a good source for learning, however disheartening. So bask in and build from what experiences have taught you. As you think it useful, briefly describe below:

- kinds of situations in which you tend to feel at home and are willing to trust:

- types of people and particular individuals who are safe and stimulating for you:

CHOOSE COURAGE RELATIONSHIPS: EMPOWER YOURSELF FIRST

- typical circumstances that allow you to be true to yourself and bloom:

- main two or three skills and abilities you want to cultivate further in order to foster the opportunities that come with thoughtful, fruitful trusting:

- some new sources for learning and accessible situations you can use or develop to create productive, trusting environments:

Add information from these responses to a people and situation **alert list** you may have created on page 11 to avoid the dangers of trusting. This combined information will be a useful personal guide for the future. Whenever you can and wish to, design your choices and actions around the information and other insights you develop.

Continuing to develop trust provides a bridge as well as a foundation to address the complex aspects of building effective relationships. As you know, these aspects interact gradually with occasional leaps forward and even backwards. The non-rational and emotional dimensions can only benefit from understanding and conversation.

But addressing each consideration separately can be overwhelming as well as impractical because they are dynamic and vary with individual situations. So be alert to where attention needs to be paid.

Here is a short list of such considerations and influences on relationships. Perhaps choose the top one that would benefit from attention in one or two significant situations. As you wish, express in the space at the end of the list specifics about how you would apply insights from any relevant category to a specific, important relationship.

- individual histories and experiences

- biological preferences, and tendencies
 - cultural norms
 - economic needs, resources, and values
 - use of power and control
-
-
-

To promote further progress, continue honoring your intuition and common sense as you take modest steps to encourage your current and future relationships. Along the way, you will strengthen your confidence in your own capacities and insight as well as improve the quality of your life. What better reasons for creating and sustaining trust with others who are worthy of *your* trust? The satisfying and effective relationships that evolve will be catalysts for meaning and enjoyment of life — not to mention mutual success.

I hope the four guides that follow in this handbook, coupled with your own ideas and experience, will take you even further. They are:

- Effective Listening
- Making Expectations Work For You
- Appreciating Your Interpersonal Capacities
- Using Charm and Care to Improve Relationships

Now for a little lightness to emphasize the connection between being and doing which form the girders of your own bridges to the future you want. To end this Introduction with a smile, here's an old quote from Jane Rosenthal Theatrical Consultants:

To do is to be: Sartre

To be is to do: Aristotle

To be or not to be: Shakespeare

Do be do be do: Sinatra