

# STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus n. an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,  
used by the ancients for writing

## **WHO DO YOU TRUST?** Lessons From a Three-Year-Old

by Nina Durfee

A recent visit with my three-year-old grandson awakened a concept I'd nearly forgotten about as the decades slipped away: unconditional trust.

Sitting on the floor, drinking him in at eye level as he danced in center-stage attention, I was nearly caught off-guard as he swiftly approached and let himself fall backward, body straight, arms relaxed. Reflexively (I've still got it!) I reached out and caught him. He never flinched, never lost the smile and exuberance, never doubted that I'd catch him. It tickled a preschool memory of the exhilaration of letting go, free-falling, and knowing that I would be safe. He squealed with delight and repeated the process over and over, trusting me so ultimately that even when my grip once faltered and he thudded on his rear, he still came back for more. I continued to catch him without question, with utmost love and concern for his safety.

His level of trust exemplifies the key to making a difference in the world: the ability to trust oneself. The concept is inherent, full knowledge that we matter enough to know that even when we fall, it's only a minor hiccup in the overall plan. We can get up, shake it off, and repeat the risky venture without so much as a ripple to disturb the depth of trust.

This degree of trust says there are mistaken actions, but not mistaken beings. This degree of trust says my inner voice is reliable. This degree of trust says feelings are the perfect gauge. This degree of trust says risk only means taking a different path. The voice of the quiet, inner, all-trusting child (the voice underneath the scared adult) tells the truth.

We're born with innocent trust in our parents, our surroundings, the universe and our selves. Our needs are few but real, and without them our lives are threatened. Air, water, food, safety, love are supplied by our creator and our parents.

With each stage of growth, our surroundings expand. At some point we sense that others don't hold our needs in the same high degree as Mom and Dad. As our circle of influence widens, the backward freefall into grandma's arms without need to announce the intention will not likely be trusted to those outside the core circle. How do we so easily forget these simple, profound abilities so early in our existence?

What gets in the way of our trust in others?

**Self-Trust.** The ability to trust others or to trust outcomes stems from recognition and honor of our own values, our own worthiness, our own abilities, and our own power to choose. A person of integrity who is reliable and dependable and follows through on her word, might expect the same in return. Is the expectation realistic? To a great degree, yes. What we look for tends to be what we see. If we expect to see the flaws in others, that's what will show up. If we expect to see their grace, that's what will show up.

What we expect to see depends in large part on what we're willing to give of ourselves. Like attracts like. The natural response to honesty and trustworthiness is honesty and trustworthiness. The natural response to doubt and mistrust is doubt and mistrust. This works both directions, and explains why someone who initially trusts himself becomes jaded when others breach his trust. Over time, we meet people who express doubt about our competence, our intelligence or our ability. It is not the veracity of that expression, but how we hold it that affects our forward progress.

We get to choose how we hold the expression of doubt by others. We can take it as gospel and stop in our tracks, or we can take it as well-intentioned and move on anyway. The question is whose vision do you want to play out – yours or the other guy's? What do you want to depend on for your own experience – what you know internally to be true, or someone else's proposition?

There are as many ideas about what you should do or how you should think or behave as there are people to express them. Choose what *you* want and move towards it. Listen to what others say and weigh it against your own truth. Take what works for you, and leave behind what doesn't support you.

Robin Crow wrote a book called *Jump and the Net Will Appear!* This is exactly what my grandson did, and he came out smelling like a rose. He knew himself to be trustworthy, and he projected that trust onto me. He expected to receive what he gave out. It's a natural process, and the laws of nature validate it.

The past is what was. The future is yet unformed. *Now* is our moment to choose, to act, to experience and to learn. Nothing puts me more in the present moment than a visit with my grandbabies. Touching and cuddling the pudgy thighs and cheeks. Watching their wide-eyed wonder. Relishing the joy in their pure, open-mouthed smiles. Admiring their self-trust in falling backwards. Acknowledging their miracle of easy absorption, retention and expression of learning. What incredible gifts are born to us humans!

The joy of unconditional love is one we would do well to offer those outside the immediate familial cluster. Offering support and trust invites support and trust, and brings us closer to a world of safety in freefall. This is the world I want, where we each love and trust unconditionally, in spite of flaws and differences, because in the end (as in the beginning) we are all the same.

The first step of trust is hearing the inner voice. That's no easy task when the inner voice has dwindled to a whisper, overshadowed by the cacophony of so many other voices. Self-trust requires outer action as well as inner silence and exploration. Nudging the pressure points of self-doubt can cause discomfort, but like any massage, it feels terrific afterwards and clears the way for greater freedom of movement.

To trust others, we must first trust ourselves.

### **Questions to Nudge the Pressure Points of Self-Doubt**

What am I afraid of?  
What's the basis for my lack of self-trust?  
If it was valid in the past, is it still valid today?  
How has fostering self-doubt affected my progress and success?  
What does failure feel like?  
What is my doubt teaching me?

### **Questions to Change Perspective**

What are my strengths?  
What do I want instead of fear?  
What will that feel like?  
What do I want instead of failure?  
What does it feel like to succeed?  
Who would I be if I trusted myself?  
What one way am I willing to trust myself?  
What one step will I take to reinforce my self-trust?  
What will I feel when my wish comes true?

### **Actions to Move You Forward**

Identify, clarify and acknowledge what you fear or doubt.

Listen to your negative self-talk, and give it a positive twist. For example, instead of saying, "If only I hadn't done that," say, "Next time I'll do this."

Keep company with those who trust you, not those who doubt you.

Do one small thing each day to stretch the boundaries of risk.

Hire a coach. Trust me, I'll stay with you through the deep waters and see you to the other shore!