

“Trust – Begins and Ends with self”

Book launch webinar Wednesday 20th January 2021

Hello to all those attending the event and also to anyone who watches the event recording, or who opens up this document and reads it.

I made a commitment to respond to every person’s question, who was present that night, with a personal response to their question by ‘close of play’ Tuesday 26th January. Here is that response.

I would like to thank those who posed the questions for airing their curiosity and giving me an opportunity to reflect and learn, as well as respond.

I hope my responses below answer your questions. If you would like to continue to engage on any of these or anything else that emerges for you on reading the questions and my responses, it will be my pleasure to continue the dialogue.

Q&A Questions asked by those attending.

Mike Owen 07:15 PM

Interesting about stories - my understanding is that elders from all cultures have historically led through storytelling, providing the why ahead of the what when seeking understanding and support. Is this another example?

Yes Mike, I believe it is. I included this passage on page 10 in the book as an example of elders telling stories that become a core part of the stories we trust, based on our culture and its associated narratives. This could equally be other famous figures in the culture that we were born into – eg for a Scot - Robert the Bruce, Mary Queen of Scots, or even Sean Connery! It also applies to how we trust stories from our parents, grandparents, or other older people who were influential in our family upbringing. It is these stories that shape how we see the world, until we choose to ‘observe’ them and perhaps re-narrate them to serve us better.

Peter Middleton 07:18 PM

Are you seeing many developments in company cultures towards harmony in regard to human culture within the ecosystem? That’s an area that I would consider to compromise trust for most people.

Peter, in the work I do with executives I do have conversations, at times, with regards to the culture of the organisation and how that leader might take action to understand it more, measure it, listen to the business, or team and take action to shift it. Based on these conversations I believe that there is more focus today on the ‘whole human’ by leaders who I work with, that leads to a different conversation about what the culture is and how it can be both a driver of performance and a way of creating greater connection and belonging in the organisation. Covid has probably accentuated this as leaders see people’s home environment behind the PC lens (and vice versa).

Peter Middleton 07:19 PM

How do we promote connection and empathy in fast paced company culture?

Peter, I believe this comes from seeing the other person as “the legitimate other”. Referencing page 136 in the book where I quote Alan Sieler, who says “the legitimate other” is “a person of equal validity, not better, not worse”. Referring to my words on page 137, I say “holding the other person and yourself as legitimate is fundamental to you trusting that person because you will hold them as equal”. I believe this is the key for leaders to ‘promote connection and empathy in a fast-paced company culture’.

Ashleigh Molloy 07:22 PM

What is one insight that would alert you to know if you are acting out of ego - ? is it how you respond to problems ?

Ashleigh, from personal experience it is when your thoughts (way of being in language) and your action (way of doing) is about you. Conversely, if you ask yourself this question, "is this about me or about / for you?" and you answer it "it is about / for you", then you are on the right path to leading for legacy.

Matt Lloyd 07:25 PM

How can the concept of trust/self be used in external recruitment ie talent acquisition as opposed to leadership development with incumbents?

Matt, by asking open and searching questions. More importantly than the questions is consciously listening to the answers and not thinking about the next question you are going to ask. By doing that you will trust yourself because you will be 'in flow' with yourself and truly present with the person you are interviewing.

Anonymous Attendee 07:26 PM

Trust is so crucial, I can't agree more. What happens when a leader starting a new position and becomes transparent and open about the importance of trust, transparency and openness and just at the beginning of his role, 1 person continuously more than 2 times proves to be untrusted? What is the way forward?

Hi, I hope this answers your questions, as I am having to assess the meaning behind the words, as I don't quite fully understand them. My apologies. When a leader starts in a new role there is always going to be a balance between openly sharing say, your mood (it could be anxiety with the new role) and 'faking it til you make it'. As I share on page 48 in the book, an action in language that you can take is to make a request. This opens you up to the possibility of learning and also gaining the trust of the other person, as you make it known to them that you don't know it all and they can help you. If you break a person's trust more than once (which I think is the meaning in your second question), then own it. This has the potential to rebuild 'the brick wall of trust' as I share on page 156 in the book.

Renzo Scacco 07:27 PM

Conor, I've worked with many C-suite execs over 20 years and been in senior leadership positions myself. It seems to me a strong level of self-belief goes hand in hand with these roles. Sometimes it can be self-belief...other times maybe its ego - which can hinder awareness. What have you seen are the effective triggers for leaders to step back and sense their effectiveness as a good leader that brings people along the journey and how does that relate to trust?

Renzo, the best 'trigger' is the body. If we sense and notice what our body / physiology is 'telling' us, then we can be guided by it. Yes, we have to move into the domain of language to make meaning of it, however the answer lies in our nervous system, more than our cognitive system. This takes learning and practice, and for most leaders who I work with, this is a new skill to be learned. However, by 'going to the body' it helps us go deeper inside ourselves than our mind allows us to do. This, I believe, is at the core of trusting ourselves - we feel, sense, and notice it, we don't only 'think it'. Perhaps the 'mind to body elevator' on page 90 in the book will help here?

Graham Shaw 07:29 PM

Hi, not having read the book yet - just interested in the idea of the 'legitimate other' and how you define that / the criteria? In psychology we refer to explanatory models as the clients explanation for what is 'going on' and the need to be sensitive and accommodate these. Is this something similar?

Graham, I refer to the '1919' hrs response above to Peter Middleton ref "the legitimate other". Also, you may like to listen to this podcast, where Deanne Duncombe and I cover this in more detail in episode 5 - <https://forthesakeofwhat.world/episodes/>.

I am not familiar with the 'explanatory' psychology models you refer to. However, from a coaching perspective when you say, 'what is going on', my listening to that is, 'what is the narrative (or story) the client is saying to him / herself and how is that serving this person? There is always a need to be sensitive to this in coaching, and a way of doing this in ontological coaching is to ask permission to share an assessment or an observation and see if that supports the client. It is NOT about 'proving yourself right' as a coach but asking a question to potentially unlock something for the client.

Sid Hamid 07:31 PM

Conor, what is the difference between psychological safety and trust in your model? How do they relate to each other in our way of being in leadership?

Sid, I refer to psychological safety as, "you won't be punished when you make a mistake" on page 166 in the book (ref HBR, Laura Delizonna). How I link this to trust (as opposed to it being 'a difference') is the I and the S in the RISSC factors of trust on page 12 in the book. The I is 'invested', and the S is 'sincere'. In other words, if my boss is 'invested' in me and I assess that to be 'sincere' then I won't fear being punished when I make a mistake. How that relates to our way of being, is we will feel it in our body through being relaxed, in our mood by being curious and in our language by a self-narrated story of, 'it's okay, my boss has my back'.

Matt Lloyd 07:36 PM

To allow for the unpredictability of the current and future realities, and also in the often incompleteness of realising 100% self-trust, in classic Pareto, is it sufficient to trust oneself or another at say 80% levels without detriment?

Matt, immediately when I read this it takes me to the notion of 'standards' and a somewhat existential response. In other words what is the standard by which I trust myself? My 100% will be different to yours based on our stories and our way of being. However, what is 100% is what we choose to observe in / of ourselves and then make meaning of in language in the moment. If that feels like we are trusting ourselves in our body and in our mood, and our self-narrative aligns with that, then that is our 100% in that moment. A way of testing this in language at ANY time is asking ourselves, before we do something, #forthesakeofwhat?

Ingrid van der Aa 07:37 PM

Does Conor and/or ontology coaching society see a link with Gestalt therapy and / or systemic work in terms of coaching with your way of being and physiology for decision making, as mentioned by Anna?

Ingrid, there are definitely some similarities between ontology and Gestalt therapy. However, I stress, ontology IS NOT a therapy. My limited understanding of Gestalt therapy is that there is an emphasis on personal responsibility and there is a focus on the present moment. Ontology has a similar focus on personal responsibility and by being 'an observer of self' being present in the moment too. As I understand it there is also Gestalt psychology that focuses more on systems thinking, where humans recognize patterns and simplify complex images when we perceive objects. In that regard, there is not a direct parallel to Ontology, that I can see. However, I am not sufficiently knowledgeable in this space to make a fully informed distinction.

Colin Bostock 07:43 PM

You talked about your goal of becoming a CEO Conor and that you believed it would benefit yourself and family. What was the real attraction of that challenge - leading others and making change or the personal kudos of the recognition that being a CEO could bring?

Colin, I believed that I could / would be a very good CEO and that I wanted to create an environment and culture of high performance and enjoyment for those who worked in the company that I led, which would also deliver great customer and shareholder value. I wanted to test myself to this 'standard', which was core to me wanting this role. However, there is no doubt, that in the very male world of the "what do you do?"

question, the answer "I am a CEO", was core to my ego and feeling that I was successful. As I share in the book on page 33, in my self-narrated story, "I lived in a Monty-Pythesque view of what good looks like in terms of hierarchy in society and what success looks like in life". I reiterate here that this is a self-narrated story and in no way lays blame anywhere. As I say in the book on page 88, "we live in our stories and our stories live in us". This was a story that lived in me – it no longer does.

Emily Mineo 07:50 PM

Advice to a junior manager, to gain trust from senior management and executive level? I can go into a meeting feeling confident about what I am about to present, however once questions come from senior management it is easy to feel small and not trust yourself?

Emily, that is so true, and we have all 'been there'. Core to this, I believe, is holding yourself as "the legitimate self". On page 137 in the book, I write, "by holding yourself as 'the legitimate self', you're not allowing yourself to be tied to the assessment others make of you." Remember, it is an assessment (a belief) that the leader in your example is making about you (and you are making about yourself), it is not an assertion (a fact). By holding this to be so, you are then potentially able to ask questions and ask for feedback so you can present yourself as a learner. That is, in my view, what every *good* (unfortunately not every) leader wants to see and hear in a young next gen leader – learning and curiosity.

Kath Walters 07:51 PM

What's the next book, Conor?

'LOL' Kath – be sure, as my book coach, you will be the first to know!!

Mick Shepherd 07:52 PM

In the process of writing the book, can you describe some key moments of realisation that perhaps was more profound than you first thought?

Mick, what emerges as I read this are a couple of things. I have the patience, perseverance and courage that is needed to remain in a mood of deep ambition. It is that mood of deep ambition that I feel is required to write a book, especially in 100 days! Secondly, that I can be vulnerable, own my mistakes and acknowledge them publicly. This has brought about a mood of peace. For the moods distinctions I use here, refer to page 87 in the book and the 'moods framework'.

Mairead Veeneklaas 07:58 PM

Conor, any advice on coaching a leader who does not trust his CEO, and has indeed been betrayed by that CEO? Happy to discuss offline if not the right question for tonight. Thank you.

Mairead, I would potentially explore with that person why they don't trust the CEO, as well as what is the betrayal they refer to, possibly using the technique of 'grounding assessments' on page 35 in the book.

Deborah Pascoe 7:50 pm

Re listening - quote from an anonymous source: "Being deeply listened to feels so much like being loved that most people can scarcely tell the difference".

Deb, so true. Being consciously listened to is a great feeling and conversely being able to consciously listen is an art which takes learning and practice. For the distinction of 'conscious listening' that I have used above and use here, please read page 141 in the book.

“Comments” Questions asked by those attending.

19:05:08 From Domenic De Fazio: Are these CEO's worthy of more TRUST.
Domenic, I am not sure which CEO's you are referring to. To answer it more generically, CEO's who today take their role as leaders in society, as well as leaders of and in their business, being core to their role, are worthy of trust. They still have to deliver against the RISSC factors of trust on page 12 in the book though! Those who don't see being a leader in society as part of their role are not necessarily worthy of less trust per se, however let's say the 'brick wall of trust' may take longer to build in the minds of those who observe them and make an assessment of trust in them.

19:13:59 From Ashleigh Molloy: Power on vulnerability
Ashleigh, yes there is power in vulnerability and I believe that a core component of that is the emotion of courage. To quote Dan Newby and Curtis Watkins in their book *Field Guide to Emotions*, they write on page 78, "courage gives us the ability to act in the presence of fear". It can be fearful to be vulnerable.

19:45:08 From Peter Middleton: Are you seeing many developments in company cultures towards harmony in regard to human culture within the ecosystem? That's an area that I would consider to compromise trust for most people. + How do we promote connection and empathy in fast paced company culture?
Peter, my response above to the question you asked at 1918hrs I hope answers this.

19:49:36 From Ashleigh Malloy: What is one insight that would alert you to know if you are acting out of ego - ? Is it how you respond to problems?
Ashleigh, my response above to the question you asked at 1922hrs I hope answers this.

19:50:17 From Deborah Pascoe: Re listening - quote from an anonymous source: "Being deeply listened to feels so much like being loved that most people can scarcely tell the difference".
Deb, my response above to the question you asked at 1950hrs I hope answers this.

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