

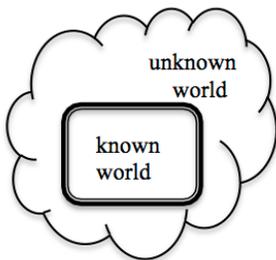
Self-Trust Leads to Personal Freedom

by Bradford Glass

“A bird sitting in a tree is not afraid of the branch breaking, because its trust is not on the branch but on its own wings.”

Imagine, just for a moment ... that instead of feeling stressed or anxious about much of life, you have a sense of clarity and perspective – about yourself, others, life, work, and the world – that leaves you confident and at ease with your authentic presence, regardless of life’s circumstances. You can.

As a student of how change happens, I’ve come to believe that the emergence of *self-trust* (like that described above) is the most significant factor in living authentically. Like the bird that trusts its wings and not the branch, when you see your well-being through the lens of your unique, inner truth, not the demands and opinions of the external world, you’re never again victim of life’s circumstances. Life blossoms into possibility ... and freedom.



Why is self-trust so elusive? As the diagram shows, part of our world is known to us; part isn’t. We often call the edge of the known world our *comfort zone*. Inside it, our beliefs, thoughts and actions make sense to us; they’re consistent with one another. The more we expand our known world, the easier it is to feel comfortable. But in a world that is growingly complex, chaotic, uncertain and paradoxical, the known is shrinking, not expanding. So we feel stressed, anxious and unsafe ... which evokes a defense response from the unconscious mind – it’s trying to protect us from what it sees as danger. Problem is that it sees anything new and different as dangerous; so in today’s world, we’re kind of stuck! We end up believing more in our limitations than

in our potential. Although we’d love to think we thrive on the new and different, fact is we hate it. So we don’t grow. As long as our world stays small, we can’t fully trust our own presence in the midst of it. What now?

As we drain energy defending ourselves from the unknown, (in a mostly-unconscious attempt to keep inevitable intruders away), we miss altogether the path that could lead us beyond the struggle, into the limitless potential life is intended to be. That path depends on two things over which we have full control: clarity of our thinking and acceptance of “what is.”

Our world is far too complex for us to know it all; it’s time to give up on the “pretend knowing” so prevalent in our culture today. We do this by learning to see objectively. We do *that* by noticing how we delude ourselves with all we think we know. The unknown will always be there; it will always be bigger than we are. What if we could simply embrace its wonder and mystery? What stops us is not the unknown itself, but a thought about it.

Here’s a new thought, one that could light the path to self-trust; you might consider making it your guide: while I will never “have it all handled,” I do, and always did, “have what it takes to handle it all.” I mean, how did you even arrive at this very moment, except by handling whatever you’ve encountered along the path? And how will you negotiate what tomorrow puts on the trail but by doing the same? Self-trust is innate; only an adopted denial of it inhibits you.

Be advised, however, that you won’t get much help in doing this. Your unconscious mind associates change with insecurity, so it won’t encourage you. Your rational mind associates ambiguity with disorder, so it won’t help either. And your friends, family and society believe there’s safety in numbers, and frankly, they need your support. All of these fall weak, however, in the presence of the authentic self – the soul self, innate creative essence, your quiet truth. Learn to hear its voice and you will hear no other. It just takes practice.

Practice: in 10 - 20 minutes of quiet reflection each day, replay in your mind thoughts from your day. As you use your *conscious* mind to interrupt the incessant jabber of the *unconscious* mind, you “catch yourself in the act” – of limiting yourself through thoughts you embrace. Noticing your thinking changes your thinking. How will you know when you trust yourself? Self-trust is a quiet inner knowing: it doesn’t need to run away; it doesn’t need to raise its voice; it doesn’t need to be afraid; you *feel* its presence. And because how you think things *should* be (predictable, rational, controllable, “your way”) no longer matters, you become open to how things *could* be (filled with possibility, even if you have no ‘evidence’ for it upfront). Self-trust leads to freedom.