

CONNECTIONS

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A NEW CHAPTER

After more than twelve years with Three Trails EFAP, I have resigned to pursue other opportunities. This has been a very difficult decision. By far, my time at Three Trails has been the most rewarding in my career. My life has been touched by the countless number of people I have been privileged to assist. These experiences have had many challenges, but it is my hope that most who have sought my services have left with something valuable.

I have been fortunate to work with extremely talented and caring colleagues during this time. They have taught me more than I can begin to measure. I am also grateful for the guidance I have been given by very dedicated Board members over the years. They kept me from feeling totally overwhelmed by the demands of our mission.

As I leave Three Trails, I am confident that the contribution it makes to our community and member employers will continue. I thank each and every one of you for this incredible opportunity I was blessed to receive. I wish you the best in your future endeavors.

May you have peace and prosperity.

Don Benson



Is Trust More Important... by Don Benson

Is Trust More Important than Love in a Relationship?

This is a provocative question. At first glance one might be appalled by the notion that anything could be more important than love in a relationship. While this may certainly be true, the question could still be "Is trust just as important as love in a relationship?"

I am compelled to put forth this question based on my work as a couple's therapist. Typically, couples do not arrive and say that they've completely fallen out of love with each other. While this does happen on occasion, more often their love for each other has faded or been whittled away, but is not the presenting cause of their distress.

So what is? You guessed it. An erosion of trust.

Love is a very stable emotion, even in the midst of turmoil and hurt. It has an unconditional quality to it. None of this is true of trust. Trust is earned and must be maintained. It is the emotional experience that is based on the relationship contract, whether it is spoken or not. It results from the reassurance that your commitment to your partner is a generally safe one to make and it allows for vulnerability. The fertile ground of trust is what allows love to grow and deepen. Otherwise, we will not open ourselves to each other, but instead keep ourselves behind safe walls that prevent the relationship from flowering.

By definition, trust must be conditional. When our trust is broken, it should go away. This is self-protective and a matter of emotional, if not physical, survival. The reestablishment of trust requires tremendous effort, not just on the part of the person who broke the contract, but on the injured partner as well.

Couples get into trouble when they confuse love and trust. If someone hurts us, it is not helpful to turn a blind eye and pretend that all is fine or that it could never happen again. To say "I forgive him because I love him" does not in any way say he should be trusted. His trustworthiness has been forfeited, however temporary it might be. Very clear efforts must be made for trust to be reestablished, efforts that have the potential to ultimately strengthen the trust and the overall relationship. If these conscious efforts are not undertaken, the integrity of the relationship remains

compromised and the love between the couple is negatively affected and can even be rendered impotent.

When a couple arrives in distress for relationship counseling, I rarely ask if they still love each other. Why would I not ask this? There is really no place to go with the answer. The question itself takes it to an intellectual level and love is anything but intellectual. It may be a feeling and an action, or something else, but it is not helpful to analyze it. Instead, however beaten down the couple's love may be, I assume that it still exists in some form since they have come together to see me.

Trust, on the other hand, has almost always been broken. It might be something as defined as an affair, but often it is a more insidious matter where one or both partners no longer feel the emotional safety that once reflected their commitment. There are plenty of ways to deal with the lack of trust. Helping the partners articulate their feelings and their needs in a safe and non-judgmental way facilitates the journey back to the emotional safety that is desperately needed. The work of couple's therapy is laborious since trust can only be established with a great deal of time and effort. However, the hard-earned effort is usually worth it. Couples can and do learn to repair broken trust and the relationship is often the better for it.

And what of the love between the couple? If the trust is repaired and the emotional safety returns, the ground has been fertilized and cultivated for the love to heal and to grow.



The Only Constant is Change...

A prime example of this is found within the family structure. People are born, arguments take place and people die. Change occurs in interpersonal relations through friendships, marriage, and divorce. It is evident even in the workplace as people are hired and leave for better opportunities, retirement and relocation. It is our desire here at Three Trails to help facilitate these changes in a positive way.

We ourselves are undergoing dramatic change. Amy Kirkman, our part-time counselor, has left for bright horizons at Casper College. She will be a great addition to their team and we wish her well. Don Benson, our director of twelve years, is sharing his experience with clients at Park Ridge Behavioral Health. He leaves with our enthusiastic support and appreciation of all he accomplished in his tenure here. I, Joanne Robinson, will be relocating in Colorado in the near future. Lynette Cotton and Pam Schmidt will continue to hold the office together.

These are all positive changes and no one is leaving with any misgivings. We will all miss each other. We are also saddened by parting with our clients, whether they have visited us once or many times.

A very positive change is the addition of Christy Jindrick-Tholl, a licensed therapist with four years of experience working at Mercer Family Resource Center. She works with children, adolescents, adults and families. With her calm manner, she will be a wonderful counselor for Three Trails.

We all look forward to welcoming her on August 22nd!

Our board of directors is working hard to fill the position of Executive Director that will uphold the good reputation that Three Trails has maintained through the years. We have had some positive feedback. Please be understanding if this process puts hardship on you. A relationship can be valuable even if it is not permanent.

THREE TRAILS EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Three Trails Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is a counseling agency designed to respond to the needs of eligible active and retired employees, spouses, and dependent family members of participating businesses and organizations.

Our mission is to provide professional assistance early and in a timely manner so that problems do not worsen. Such concerns may include workplace stress, marriage and family tensions, alcohol and drug abuse, and other difficulties that may impact individuals. Counselors at Three Trails assess the scope and nature of the presenting concerns and will either provide counseling or refer the individual(s) to specialized services as necessary.

Three Trails EFAP is staffed by three counselors and an administrative assistant. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 237-5750 or stop by the office at 812 South David Street.

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday & Wednesday	9:00 to 6:00 pm
Tuesday & Thursday	9:00 to 7:00 pm
Fridays	12:00 to 5:00 pm

We are closed through the noon hour
except on Fridays.