

CHALLENGE VII

BEFORE THE MONEY FLOWS

In my pursuit of money and success, I discovered something even more powerful—the ability to trust myself and to trust my entrepreneurial journey. With this trust, I have something all the money in the world can't buy.

It wasn't until I became an entrepreneur that I realized how money and success were tightly bound within myself. I began to realize that when I made money, I felt great, and when I didn't make money, I felt terrible.

I struggled with the correlation of success and money. How could I feel successful all the time instead of just when I made money? Because there were so many times when I was not making money and feeling terrible, I forced myself to evaluate my understanding of success. What did success really mean to me? How could I feel successful all the time? I needed to find out.

I soon discovered that I did not trust the process of success. I did not understand what success really meant to me. It was during this critical time before the money flowed that I learned how to trust and feel successful. Success was within me—not outside me. Had money flowed to me during this critical time of redefining my understanding of success and learning how to trust, I never would have truly experienced success nor would I have learned how to trust the process that I was in. I would still be experiencing the yo-yo effect of success—allowing my success to be determined by how much money I earned. I needed to learn to trust the process and understand what success really meant to me.

My definition of success defines what is important to me, not what is important to the outside world. I now believe that I am successful because I live the life I desire. This definition is unconditional—meaning that it doesn't change if I make a lot of money or a little money. It is a standard for me to live by.

It has taken me several years to learn how to trust the process and live by my new definition of success. I realize now that in this process of redefining success, I expanded my knowledge, trust and belief in myself. I learned what was important to me.

The time before the money flows is perhaps the most important time in entrepreneurship. It is when we “crystallize” ourselves—we become what we believe—through the act of entrepreneurship. It is during this time that we truly know we are on the path, that we are on the way to entrepreneurial success. Why? Because we have become successful within ourselves. We are no longer filled with doubt but rather filled with self-knowledge and a belief in what we are doing that is beyond even our own comprehension. You may ask entrepreneurs who have re-evaluated their definition of success and who trust the process but have not yet experienced the flow of money, “Why are you doing this?” If they have created a definition of success that is a part of who they are and truly trust the process, they will answer with a powerful statement that is

basically summed up in two words: “I believe.” “I believe it is what I am meant to be doing.” They are armed with knowledge—of themselves. They trust the process and have moved into a new level of living, thinking and believing. Their response will completely affirm who they are. They trust that the money will flow rather than question when it will flow. This is the value in getting through the time “before the money flows.”

**Just trust yourself.
Then you will know how to live.**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Trusting Yourself and the Process

The answer is to trust myself and trust the process. I tried trusting money, that didn't work. I tried trusting success, that didn't work either. I need to trust myself and the process before either money or success can come to me.

Trust is at the core of experiencing the success we desire. This core or foundation is built on trusting ourselves and trusting the process. The pace of our progress, especially before the money flows, depends on developing this level of trust in ourselves and in the overall process—in the overall order of things. You may ask, “How do I simply trust the process when I don’t know where I am going?” The answer is to know and trust that wherever you are being led is for your highest good. When we believe that what is happening in our lives is for our highest good, we can trust ourselves and trust the process.

Trusting can be difficult. In order to trust, we need to let go of control. We need to let go of the way we think things are supposed to work out. We usually don’t think that we need to let go of control until we have reached a point in our lives when our way, the way we think things should be, doesn’t work. It is at this point that we have a choice. We can either let go of control and start trusting or we can try to control our lives even more. We may try to control our lives more by working more, working harder or forcing a solution to a problem. I chose to control and probably suffered mental strain unnecessarily because I didn’t want to let go of control. Letting go of control and learning to trust myself and the process was extremely difficult for me. But I did it, not because I wanted to, but because my way wasn’t working. It wasn’t creating the results I desired in my life. It took me a long time to let go of control and trust.

Most clients who were challenged financially, mentally or on some other level, came in for business counseling either because they, too, needed to let go of control or because they stopped trusting. Their way wasn’t working. They got scared, which is a normal response when our way isn’t working or we stop trusting. The problem is that when we stop trusting, we stop moving forward. Everything in our lives, including the money that we want to flow to us, is on “hold.” Money cannot flow to us when we do not trust that it will flow to us. We need to work through whatever feeling or emotion stopped us from trusting in the first place and begin trusting again.

How do we learn to trust? We learn to trust by making the decision to trust. Lack of trust is why most people choose not to make the journey into entrepreneurship, or to turn back and not complete the journey. We choose to trust ourselves and the process. We then take appropriate actions that reflect that trust. Several years ago, I knew it was time to let go of my office space, move back to my home office and accept a long-term contract with the Small Business Development Center to counsel clients. I didn’t understand “why” I needed to do this; I just knew and trusted that it was what I needed to do. I took action that reflected this trust by moving out of my office space and accepting the contract. I knew it was right for me, even though I could not justify it and could not completely explain or understand it. I just trusted it. Years later, I understand the role that contract had in my life. It gave me the experience to write this book. We learn to trust.

Once we begin to trust ourselves, we can begin to trust the process and the journey we are on.

When we trust ourselves, we trust the process.

Another way to trust is to realize that we've earned the right to trust. We earn trust when we give ourselves credit for the work we've done to get to this point in our personal and professional lives. We didn't get here by accident. We worked on ourselves to get here. We became brave, we learned to listen to ourselves, to change, develop our uniqueness, persevere, strengthen ourselves and have faith. We earned the right to trust.

The same principles apply in learning to trust ourselves and the process as in maintaining this level of trust. We can increase our trust by respecting and acknowledging ourselves and recognizing our value as a person. Once we maintain a level of trust in ourselves and in the process, we need to continue to grow personally and professionally. We do this by continuing to improve ourselves and letting go of whatever is not working in our lives.

Are you trying to control the process or do you trust the process? One way to know if you are controlling or trusting is by examining your thoughts and feelings. For example, when I am trying to control the process I get uptight, start worrying and feel fearful about my future. When I trust the process I feel focused, enjoy each day and feel positive about my future.

Are you willing to let go of control and trust the process? What do you need to let go of so you can start trusting? For example, I needed to let go of controlling the way I wanted my future to unfold and learn to trust that it would unfold for my highest good. Describe what you need to let go of so you can start trusting.

Learning to trust takes time. As you begin to trust yourself and the process, describe what it feels like to trust. Just like you experienced discomfort by trying new things and experiencing new feelings by working through challenges in this book, this feeling of trust may not be comfortable at first. Expect that. If it is uncomfortable or different, you are growing and experiencing trust.

Describe what it feels like to trust.

If you are having a difficult time learning to trust, write about it in your journal every day for a week. Ask yourself, “Why is it so difficult for me to trust?” and wait for the answer. You can discover more of yourself and find out why you do not trust. It took me a long time and a lot of writing to learn to trust the process.

We can increase our level of trust by acknowledging ourselves for the progress we’ve made. For example, I worked at developing my trust in myself and in the process by accepting compliments from others, treating myself as I would like others to treat me and knowing that I was living my life to its fullest. In what ways will you acknowledge yourself for the progress you’ve made on this journey thus far? You can continue to increase this trust in yourself by doing this exercise regularly.

Sometimes we forget everything we’ve learned and stop trusting. In this case, we need to go back to basics and find ways to help us trust the process. For example, it helps me remember to trust when I immerse myself in nature and reflect on the natural order of things in the universe—how

birds, fish and animals instinctively know how to live and find food, how a spider makes a web and trusts that his creation will provide him food. What will you do to remember to trust when you've forgotten?

I trust myself and I trust the process.