

Why You Trusted the Wrong People at Work — And Why It Wasn't Your Fault

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If you've ever looked back on a workplace betrayal and thought,

"How did I not see it?"

"How did I trust them?"

"How did I miss the signs?" you're not alone — and you're not foolish.



You trusted the wrong people at work because you were human.

Because you were kind.

Because you assumed others had the same moral compass you did.

And because workplaces are full of power dynamics, hidden agendas, and social cues that trick even the strongest, smartest women into trusting people who never deserved access to their inner world.

This isn't a flaw in you. It's a flaw in the system.

Let's break it down.

You trusted because trust is human — not because you were naïve

Trust is a survival instinct.

It's wired into your biology.

It's how humans form communities, stay safe, and work together.

Your brain is designed to look for connection, not danger.

But in modern workplaces, this instinct can backfire.

You're not dealing with predators in the wild — you're dealing with:

- power imbalances
- office politics-hidden motives
- people who perform morality instead of living it

Your nervous system wasn't built for this kind of environment. So, you trusted — because that's what good people do. You trusted power, not character — because that's what we're conditioned to do

Research shows we often trust people who appear:

- confident
- influential
- well connected
- charismatic
- high status-even when they haven't earned it.

In workplaces, this often means:

- the "cool kids"
- the loudest voices
- the ones who seem important
- the ones everyone else follows

Meanwhile, the truly trustworthy people — the quiet thinkers, the ethical ones, the steady ones — are often overlooked. You didn't choose wrong. You were responding to a system designed to reward the wrong people. You trusted the people who seemed safe — because the unsafe ones hide it well. **Some people are simply better at pretending.**

Research calls them the Dark Triad or Dark Tetrad:

- narcissists
- manipulators
- charmers
- people who enjoy control
- people who enjoy causing harm

These individuals are often:

- charismatic
- confident
- socially skilled
- good at mirroring your values
- excellent at gaining trust quickly

They know exactly how to present themselves as allies — until they no longer need you.

You didn't misjudge them. They misrepresented themselves.

You trusted because you were new — and new employees are vulnerable.

When you enter a new workplace, you're trying to:

- find your footing
- understand the culture
- figure out who's who
- avoid stepping on landmines

So, you look for guidance. You look for belonging. You look for someone who seems to know the rules.

But in dysfunctional workplaces, the people who step forward first are often:

- the gossipers
- the manipulators
- the ones who want to recruit you
- the ones who want to test your loyalty
- the ones who want information

You weren't naïve. You were adapting.

You trusted because you assumed others shared your values

This is the hardest truth:

You trusted the wrong people because you believed they were like you.

You believed they were:

- honest
- fair
- kind
- ethical
- loyal
- decent

You assumed they meant what they said. You assumed they cared about the mission. You assumed they wanted to do good work. But some people don't operate from morality — they operate from dominance.

And when empowered leaders give influence to people with weak moral identity, those individuals often use it to harm others, not help them.

You didn't fail. Your values simply didn't match theirs.

You trusted because you were kind — and kindness is not a weakness

Let's be clear:

Kindness is not the problem. Boundaries are not the problem. Your heart is not the problem.

The problem is that workplaces often reward:

- secrecy
- manipulation
- competition
- image management
- loyalty to power, not truth

In these environments, good people get hurt because they assume goodness is the norm.

It's not your fault you trusted the wrong people. It's your strength that you still believe in integrity.

How to Fine-Tune Your Trust Meter Going Forward

Here are some grounded, practical ways to protect yourself without hardening your heart:

1. Pause before trusting your gut

Your instincts evolved for physical danger, not office politics. Give yourself time to observe.

2. Look for moral traits, not charisma

Honesty. Dependability. Fairness. Compassion. Consistency.

These matter more than confidence or charm.

3. Notice who withholds information

People who hide details for personal gain are not trustworthy.

4. Watch how they treat others, not how they treat you

Bullies are often charming to the people they want to recruit.

5. Maintain boundaries

Work is not family. Kindness is free. Trust is earned.

You can be warm without being wide open.

Here's the truth you need to hear:

You didn't trust the wrong people because you were weak. You trusted them because you were human.

You trusted because you believed in goodness. You trusted because you wanted to belong. You trusted because you assumed others had the same heart you did.

Your mistake wasn't trusting. Your mistake was assuming everyone was worthy of it.

And that's a mistake you can forgive yourself for.

Gentle Invitation

If this article stirred something inside you or helped you make sense of past workplace pain, you're welcome to reach out when you feel ready. You don't need perfect words — just honesty. I read every message myself, and I respond with care, not pressure. When the moment feels right, you can send me a note and I'll meet you there.

References-Click on the highlighted blue to follow the link

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