

Steve Carlson ([00:19](#)):

Welcome to our fourth and final podcast in our month long series. Each week, we have been focusing in on a different quality of worker wellness that might strengthen you as you support caregivers in the grips of addiction and or mental illness. We will be exploring the balance between trust and healthy skepticism in child welfare. It is widely known that when someone is taken over by an addiction, keeping the flow of that drug becomes a primary life goal. Even at the expense of their own children, it is quite common for people with substance use disorders to hide behind a wall of deceit, to assure themselves access to the substance that satisfies the craving associated with dependency. No one decides early in life they want to grow up to be an addict. Most parents want to do well by their children. Addictions make it very difficult to do so. Child welfare workers are challenged to see through the influence of the drug and into the heart of the parent. To do this, we need to both trust and have skepticism. Today's podcast and mindfulness meditation will support your capacity to distrust the insidious and destructive power of addictions while trusting, in the caregivers desire to be a loving parent.

Steve Carlson ([01:53](#)):

As we begin, settle yourself into a comfortable position. If you are driving, please be mindful of the road and your safety, as well as the safety of others. Wherever you are begin by taking in a deep breath. You can either close your eyes or soften your gaze to support becoming grounded and centered simply by attending to your breath. As you inhale, follow your breath in and down toward your diaphragm, hold onto your breath for a few seconds and exhale. With each breath settle further into this present moment. As thoughts and sensations and emotions arise, acknowledge them, release them, and simply gradually return to the awareness of being here now . Notice that your mind and body naturally settle into a peaceful state as you let go of control, trusting that you are held by a gentle unseen force of gravity. And that in this moment, you are safe and you are loved. Allow the source of life and love to simply hold you and contain all your thoughts and emotions, satisfy every need you have in this moment.

Steve Carlson ([03:19](#)):

As you breathe in, recognize that we are wired to trust. And our ability to trust is a critical thread in the social fabric, in which we are all woven. It is also true that our survival depends on knowing when to trust and when not to. Our most basic everyday decisions rely on trust. While on the road you trust other drivers will stop at red lights. When you make a purchase, you trust the store clerk is not going to steal your credit card number. On the other hand, if a stranger offers you a ride home, you will hesitate to jump in the car. We would not automatically trust someone to do brain surgery if they have not been to medical school. And when I board a plane, I often glance at the pilot to see if they appear competent to fly the plane safely, but can I always trust in my own instinct?

Steve Carlson ([04:21](#)):

Well, not really. Our understanding of reality is influenced significantly by past experience and social convention. Here's a little story from history. In the late 1500s, everyone trusted Aristotle's claim that heavy objects fall to the ground faster than lighter ones. That is everyone except Galileo. To test Aristotle's claim, Galileo dropped two balls of differing weight from the Leaning Tower of PISA, and guess what? They both hit the ground at the same time. For challenging Aristotle's authority. Galileo was fired from his job. But for his place in history, he showed us that testing human claims should be the mediator of all truth. A healthy skepticism supports finding a path to what is true. We walk that path by

asking questions with an open mind and heart by critically reflecting on the information in front of us, the work of child welfare is far more complicated than testing the falling speed of two balls.

Steve Carlson ([05:34](#)):

Our observations and recommendations regarding child safety can literally mean the difference between life and death, relapse and recovery, family reunification, and family disillusion. To be successful, we need an ability to trust our clients' deeper hopes and dreams while mistrusting the influence of drugs and the sometimes unpredictable course of mental illness. Healthy distrust allows us to set boundaries around another's behavior in a way that likely limits their freedom yet supports a working relationship. Our task is to recognize the source of our mistrust, normalize it, and don't personalize it. Trust can then emerge as we confront the common enemy of addiction and mental illness, as we cooperate and collaborate on the primary goal; healthy and responsible parenting. Our attitude plays an important role as well in navigating the edge between trust and distrust. Healthy skepticism is not the same as being cynical. A cynic distrusts most information they see or hear particularly when it challenges their own belief system.

Steve Carlson ([06:56](#)):

On the other hand, the term skeptic is a far more positive term derived from a Greek word, meaning to inquire or look around. The skeptic understands and openly acknowledges the power of addiction while supporting the deeper power of parental love. In our skepticism, we ask open and nonjudgmental questions, which leads to greater understanding of what is going on. We collaboratively discover creative solutions and we are able to move past unhelpful type-casting. We also become role models to children, especially teenagers, to believe in their ability of listening to and trust their instincts and think for themselves. Which leads to believing in themselves. In closing out our podcast meditation on trust and healthy skepticism, bring to mind the clients you will be meeting with today. What do you want to explore? How do you want to support their growth? What is your intention for these meetings? As you continue with your day, as you do the work of protecting children and supporting recovery and parents and caregivers take with you the confidence of trust and the wisdom of healthy skepticism. Namaste

New Speaker ([08:31](#)):

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