Peering over the edge of the cliff, I see my classmates far below; so far below, in fact, that they seem tiny to me. Attached to my harness is a thick, twisted rope securely tied to a loop on my belt. I think, if I were to fail, I would surely plummet to my certain demise. My life is completely in the hands of the two instructors behind me. What if I come unclipped? What if the rope breaks? What if the instructor makes a mistake with my harness?

I push these doubts to the far corners of my mind and muster all of the courage I can manage. Pleading with my disobedient limbs to stop shaking, I close my eyes and visualize the jump. I reassure myself with the idea that people have completed this exact same obstacle many times. I look directly into the calm eyes of Bill, the ropes course instructor. He smiles reassuringly, and then he nods. I suddenly feel better. As I leap from the wooden platform, my stomach drops and fear strikes me, but then the thrilling sensation of flying through the air fills me with joy, and a feeling of freedom and invincibility shoots down my spine. Now I’m glad I had trusted Bill. I was glad I had trusted myself. I was glad I had trusted my instincts.

The memory of that experience over a year ago resurfaced in my mind recently, and it caused me to examine the value of trust as a part of human existence. Trust is a firm belief in the reliability or strength of oneself or someone else. Jumping into the air that day, I had placed my life in the hands of others. In the event of someone making a mistake with the harness or knot, I could have possibly plummeted to my death or been seriously injured. Knowing that, I still jumped because I believed in myself and in the integrity and reliability of the instructor.

On the surface, trusting someone is simple. However, knowing why or when to trust is a bit complex. Placing one’s trust in others is a gradual process. It takes time to build bonds. All people are different in the levels of faith they have in the people around them. Some place complete confidence in people that they have recently met, and others might require years of diligence to even scratch the surface of their trust. Yet, if self-trust is strong first, then it follows that it’s also easier to trust others, even if it takes time to do so.

One time in which I have to put my trust in others is when I play team sports. Teams can't effectively function as a random bunch of individuals on a field. In order to be successful, a team must work together to achieve. One must have faith in the person next to him to do his or her job and fulfill his or her task. When I play football and lacrosse, I must trust the people around me to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. The converse is also true. The other players must trust me to fulfill my task. If a single member fails, then the whole team could be in jeopardy.

Last year I read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. I noticed that Twain explores the theme of trust through Huck, the main character, and Jim, an Escaped slave. As they begin to float down the Mississippi River, they start out a little distrustful of each other, but this changes over time. They save each other multiple times, and they grow to have confidence in each other to do any assigned tasks or duties. They divide jobs equally and have assurance in the other to do tasks correctly and efficiently. The most prominent examples of trust between them is in Huck’s keeping the secret of Jim’s escape. Despite offers of rewards of much money and vast bounties for Jim, Huck doesn’t even consider abandoning his friend, and Huck continues to help Jim become a free man.

Likewise, I came across a quote by Stephen Covey, an American author and businessman. “Trust is the glue of life. It’s the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.” This quote caused me to examine my own life in this regard. Whom do I trust? Well, I trust my parents to feed and clothe me and also to guide me in everything that I do. I trust my friends to support me and steer me in the right direction in life. I trust my teachers and coaches to teach me the lessons I need to succeed in life and to prepare me for what lies ahead. I also trust them to help me form a foundation and to bolster me when I am struggling. Hopefully, the list of people here trust me equally as much.

Let me finish with an example of trust that stands out in my experience. (It may sound small, but it is important to me). When I first exited the bus at camp, I was slightly intimidated. Upon arriving at my cabin, a counselor greeted me with a beaming smile and welcomed me. My nervousness began to fade a bit as he helped me lug my trunk up the stairs and make my bed, but I was still unsure about him. As we spent more and more time together over the next few weeks, I began to trust him wholeheartedly, and we became great friends that could depend on each other. Though it took time for my trust in him to be complete, the end result was well worth it: a caring and supportive friend... and perhaps too it facilitated my leap from that wooden platform! Someday, I hope make as great an impact on a child’s life as this counselor made on mine.

Trustworthiness is one of the most admirable and valuable traits that one can possess. Without these bonds of reliability, groups function as multiple individuals instead of one cohesive unit. Trust saves lives, builds relationships, and propels the world forward. If every single individual could learn to have faith in each other, the world would be a different place. I know I hope to play my part in the world’s chain of trust because for me trust truly is a central law in my life.