

# Let's Talk: The value of being vulnerable

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Hi, my name is Katie. Today let's talk about vulnerability. First off, what comes to mind when you hear the word vulnerability? For many of us, it conjures up feelings of fear or anxiety, and thoughts of being exposed, or maybe even at risk. Some might even associate vulnerability with weakness. Vulnerability can trigger a lot of "what if" type questions. What if I'm not good enough? What if I'm not seen for who I really am? What if I'm misunderstood? What if I put myself out there and I'm rejected? These common reactions occur for any number of reasons. Past hurts, childhood pain, perceived failures, broken relationships, so on and so forth. So while we may have our own ideas of what vulnerability means, let's take a minute to discuss how author and researcher Brené Brown defines vulnerability.

## A definition of vulnerability

She says it's uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. She goes on to explain that vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center of meaningful human experiences. This sheds a different light on how we typically think of vulnerability. So yes, being vulnerable can be scary and risky, but what if it's worth it? Brené Brown presents another way to think about vulnerability. She says that vulnerability is necessary. In order to truly connect with others and live fully, we need to be willing to take the risk. If we numb this part of ourselves out of fear, then we are likely missing out on true connection.

## How to start being vulnerable

So then the question is, how do we put this into practice? How can each of us become more vulnerable? Here are some suggestions to get us started.

### **Know yourself**

Take the time to truly know yourself. One way to do this is to journal about your hopes, dreams, goals, passions, fears, successes, failures. You might consider talking to a professional counselor. Getting to know yourself isn't necessarily easy work, but finding your true self is certainly worth the effort.

### **Accept yourself**

Another thing is to accept yourself. Accepting oneself and knowing oneself are closely linked. In order to truly know something about yourself, you must first accept it. Seek to let go of the person you think you are supposed to be, and begin to embrace the person that you are. Be open to the

truth that you are worthy and that you are enough. Prepare yourself by setting realistic expectations. When beginning the journey towards self-acceptance and openness with others, know that pain may and likely will come, but that you'll get through it.

## **Practice vulnerability**

Another idea is to practice vulnerability with people that you feel comfortable with. Being vulnerable does not mean that you have to tell your deepest secrets to every person that you meet. As you step out of your comfort zone in this way, choose a few close confidants to practice this with. The more you share, perhaps the more alive and connected you will begin to feel. Don't underestimate the power of being your true self with another person, and having that person see you and accept you for who you are. This sets the stage for deep, meaningful connection.

## **One step at a time**

And lastly, take it one step at a time. Each time you reveal more of your true self to the people in your life, it becomes a little less daunting. With that said, if you have setbacks or moments of uncertainty, remember that that is okay and absolutely normal. Keep track of how you feel when you practice vulnerability, and note the outcomes of these experiences. It isn't going to look a certain perfect way, and it's really not supposed to. The goal is to embrace life in a new and meaningful way.

*Visual reference and source: Brown, Brené. Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. New York: Avery; 2012*

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