

The Importance of Vulnerability

“Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection.”

-- Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*

The Importance of Vulnerability

- Vulnerability is the essence of humanness. It means we are open and available to all of life's experience.
- Vulnerability hones the soul—it's necessary for it to grow and develop and learn. The openness of vulnerability is what allows us to learn. If we are defended we cannot learn.
- Vulnerability is what allows us to be Open and available to all of life's experiences.
- Vulnerability is what allows immediacy of experience and intimacy with ourselves and others.

The Power of Vulnerability

- When we protect or defend against our vulnerability, we are acting from the belief that we are weak, lack the capacity to tolerate pain, and in need of external protection and support.
- Paradoxically, being, acting, and speaking authentically leads to a sense of meaning and inner peace.
- When we allow ourselves to be undefended, we are standing in the truth of our being, of who we really are, which is self-sufficient and needs no defense.

What's Needed to be Vulnerable?

- The strength to tolerate the discomfort of painful feelings.
- The bravery to confront disowned parts of ourselves.
- The courage to challenge our thoughts and beliefs.

- The willingness to surrender being perfect (i.e., who we're *supposed* to be), including the tendency to compare.
- The wisdom to surrender the need for love and approval.
- The compassion to love ourselves exactly as we are.
- The commitment to seek the truth.
- The faith to trust that no matter what happens, we will be all right.

Vulnerability and Ego

“Ego is based mainly on defenses—defending itself against dangers—inner and outer, imaginary and real. Ego does not really exist without its defenses. . . . But when we are trying to defend ourselves internally, we are in some senses trying to run away. We are trying to hide. We are trying to isolate, to separate ourselves, to put a distance between us and the danger. . . . The intent is to avoid being open because being open means leaving oneself undefended and unprotected. Being open means being ourselves, and we believe that being ourselves is dangerous because then we are vulnerable to all kinds of threats.”

— A. H. Almaas, *The Unfolding Now*, p. 48.

Helping the Parties Get to the Vulnerable Feelings Underneath Their Positions

- Connection and understanding versus fixing.
- The art of listening.
 - The need to *wait*. Stay with confusion and not-knowing, so that your own stuff doesn't get in the way of a deeper understanding of what's happening.
 - Listening from compassion.
 - Where are you listening from? Head, heart and belly.
 - Ego and beyond ego: Listening from Presence.

Different Dimensions of Listening From Vulnerability

- Transference-Countertransference: Attend to your own inner state as a barometer of what might be happening with the parties you're working with.
- Find the back story: who or what are they really mad at?
- Listen for what each party is unconscious of. What is their unconscious motivation? What are they afraid to feel?
- Listen for their coping styles: how do they manage their anxiety and regulate their internal states? How are they attempting to protect their vulnerability?
- Listen for the missing conversation.