

The Power Within Vulnerability

By Dr. Tim Sharp

So many of us have been raised to believe we can't show any weaknesses; so many of us have learned to hide any and all of our shortcomings believing that if they were known to and seen by others we'd be judged negatively.

Yet we all have them (i.e., weaknesses and limitations); and although it might seem counterintuitive, embracing our "faults" and owning our vulnerability can actually make us stronger! The power of vulnerability is one of the least used, but potentially one of the most important concepts we can apply in our lives.

Consider the following:

Every single one of us has failings; which means those of us who're not perfect are by far in the way in the majority!

Research reported by Amy Cuddy, Harvard Business School Associate Professor, reveals that managers who show vulnerability and express empathy are rated more highly than those who focus more on appearing to be competent at all times

Brene Brown, probably the most famous advocate for vulnerability, Research Professor and TED superstar, proposes that vulnerability can make our lives better because it makes us and life more real!

What does she mean by this?

Embracing all of your parts

Well, quite simply, life is not perfect; and no one in this world is perfect. Pretending we are or can be is just unrealistic. And taking an unrealistic approach in any area will only lead to disappointment and frustration.

In contrast, being vulnerable is being real; it's being authentic and genuine. These traits are actually valued by others, not judged negatively as we sometimes fear, and so vulnerability can (counterintuitively for some) generate more power and respect.

Not that long ago, I had a very personal experience along these lines. For most of my adult life I've intermittently suffered bouts of (at times) severe depression. Thankfully, for most of the last few decades, I've enjoyed a considerable degree of success and much happiness. But every now and then the black clouds of hopelessness and helplessness and nihilism descend and shroud me in misery.

Up until relatively recently, no one knew about this apart from my immediate family. Like many others who suffer psychological problems, I became extremely adept at “putting on a brave face” and hiding my emotions from others (even some of my very closest friends).

Be open to being vulnerable

But in April this year (2016) I published my latest book; and whereas I’d written all of my previous 7 books, the content for this one was collected from 12 amazing people who told 12 inspirational stories of how they coped with and bounced back from adversity. Reading their stories throughout the editing process, combined with a few other considerations, led me to determine that the timing was right for me to “come out” and publicly declare my own story.

The chapters in “Transformation: turning tragedy into triumph” (Finch, 2016) are testament to the courage of a number of individuals to openly discuss and share their vulnerabilities. Having spoken at length with the other authors I know we’ve all shared pretty much the same experience; and that is that following admissions of psychological and physical challenges, the response from family and friends and even the wider public has been overwhelmingly positive.

Bumping in to a friend of a friend at the supermarket recently I was told, in response to my story, “it’s so good and reassuring to hear people being open and honest”.

So if you’re feeling vulnerable or if you have an issue with which you’ve always struggled, try to remember that we’re all fighting battles; and that fighting the battle doesn’t make you weak but rather, it actually means you’re strong!

Source; <http://www.juicedaily.com.au/spirit/the-power-within-vulnerability/>