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## VULNERABILITY – IT'S CRUCIAL FOR CONNECTION, RESOURCES, BOOKS AND MORE!

Judging by the feedback, a lot of you found last month's newsletter informative and helpful. That's great! This month's newsletter is bursting : our feature article is about vulnerability – what it is, what it isn't, and what you can do to step into it. There's also a list of supports, and a few books you might find beneficial.

And don't forget, our last article was about non-traditional families – the 'new normal' with families. Click [here](#) to learn more, and to access all our previous articles.

## VULNERABILITY ... ISN'T A DIRTY WORD!

**By Amanda Pulford**  
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Vulnerability! Yes – it is definitely one of those words that deserves an exclamation mark. It's generally not a comfortable emotion, some of us run screaming in the other direction from it, if we need to step into it – we might need to be dragged kicking and yelling to it ... yet it is so important for every aspect of our lives. Why? Because without vulnerability we don't have connection, belonging or even creativity.

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## What is Vulnerability

Dr Brené Brown (the most published researcher and author on vulnerability) describes vulnerability as “uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure”. No wonder it doesn't feel comfortable, and we'd rather eat raw chopped liver than be vulnerable.

## Why is Vulnerability Important?

Vulnerability is so important because it is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy and creativity. Brené also says that “it is the source of hope, empathy, accountability and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper or meaningful lives, vulnerability is the path.” Phew, no wonder vulnerability takes courage! *The courage to show up, be seen, and be truly ourselves.*

## Some Examples of Vulnerability

While we are all individual and we all experience vulnerability in different ways, some commonly reported examples of vulnerability are:

- “Saying ‘no’”
- “Asking for help”
- “Standing up for myself”
- “Opening up”
- “Being authentic”
- “Falling in love”
- “Saying ‘I love you’”
- “Ending a relationship”
- “Telling the truth ... even if I know it will hurt the other person”
- “Applying for a job”
- “Being made redundant”
- “Admitting I'm afraid”
- “Admitting I don't know”
- “Being accountable”

## What Vulnerability Isn't

Vulnerability isn't ‘letting it all hang out’, it isn't oversharing, it's not purging, it's not indiscriminate disclosure, and it's not social media information dumps. All of these can create the opposite of vulnerability and openness – distancing, overwhelm, rejection, and shutdown.

## What Stops Us From Being Vulnerable

It's important to note that it's instinctual and natural to avoid situations where we might get injured, even if that injury is ‘only’ psychological.

However, what stops us from being vulnerable is **fear, fear and more FEAR!**

We fear :

- being shamed by others
- being not worthy, not loveable, and/or not good enough
- being socially rejected
- having our deepest desires trampled upon, rejected, or unfulfilled
- the same thing happening again – if we were deprived of adequate attention, given mixed messages, or abandoned in our early years, we tend to expect the same painful treatment from everyone else in the world
- more hurt – the more interpersonal or romantic wrongs we've experienced, the more our mind sends the memo: *Remain on high alert!*

## How To Be Vulnerable

Vulnerability relies on mutuality and requires boundaries and trust. Vulnerability is about sharing our feelings and experiences with the people who have earned the right to hear them. It is important to have a safe space around you when you're choosing to be vulnerable. And you need trusting people who are supportive, open and non-judgmental.

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So, create a supportive space to be vulnerable, and then follow the next steps ... lean into your fear!

1. **Ask for what you need.** We often close off when we're in pain – to try to protect ourselves and those around us. However, admitting that we need support allows those closest to feel for us and respond to us, and in turn forms close connections.
2. **Say what you feel.** Acknowledging, accepting and communicating our feelings is an important part of being in touch with ourselves and sharing ourselves with others.
3. **Say what you want.** I think this is really hard for most people, because we fear rejection. However, unless we're surrounded by people who can read minds, we have to ask for what we want as we all have different needs.
4. **Say your truth.** This doesn't mean being insensitive or hurtful, but it does mean offering an authentic perspective, which in turn shows more of our real selves.
5. **Slow down and be present.** Part of vulnerability is being willing to be present with someone else. This can be harder than it sounds. Listening, observing, giving time, and appropriately responding to another creates intimacy.

### The Take Away

Vulnerability feels so awkward and scary, but it also makes us feel human and alive ... it's where courage and fear meet.

## Supports

If you want to learn more about vulnerability, the following links might be helpful.

### The Power of Vulnerability

[https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)

Brené Brown studies human connection - our ability to empathize, belong, love. In a poignant, funny talk, she shares a deep insight from her research, one that sent her on a personal quest to know herself as well as to understand humanity. A talk to share.

### Brené Brown

<https://brenebrown.com/>

Brené believes that vulnerability – the willingness to be “all in” even when you know it can mean failing and hurting – is brave.

### The Gottman Institute – Be The Change You Wish To See In Your Relationship

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/be-the-change-you-wish-to-see-in-your-relationship/>

If you want your partner to change, start by accepting them for who they are. In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, Dr. John Gottman says, “People can change only if they feel that they are basically liked and accepted the way they are. When people feel criticized, disliked, and unappreciated they are unable to change. Instead, they feel under siege and dig in to protect themselves.”

## More ...

I've been reading the following books on vulnerability. They're all by Brené Brown, who I think truly shows us the value of vulnerability, leaning into fear and living what we value the most; and the downside of shame, playing small, and disconnection.

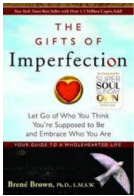
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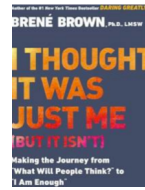
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### **The Gifts of Imperfection** by Brené Brown

We are led to believe that if we could only look perfect and lead perfect lives, we'd no longer feel inadequate. So, most of us perform, please, and perfect. This important book is about the lifelong journey from 'What will people think?' to 'I am enough.'

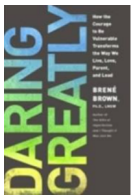


### **I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't)** by Brené Brown

Shame manifests itself in many ways. Addiction, perfectionism, fear and blame are just a few of the outward signs of shame's effects on women. We live in a culture that tells us we must reject our bodies, reject our authentic stories and, ultimately, reject our true selves in order to fit in and be accepted.

As always, if you would like some help, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195,

[admin@awakenpsychology.com.au](mailto:admin@awakenpsychology.com.au) or [click here](#)



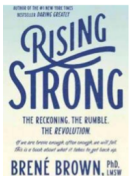
### **Daring Greatly** by Brené Brown

Brené encourages us to embrace vulnerability and imperfection, to live wholeheartedly and courageously. Daring Greatly is an invitation to be courageous; to show up and let ourselves be seen, even when there are no guarantees. This is vulnerability.

Something you may not know about Awaken Psychology is that we work with Corporate's too. Each year, we partner with Leadership Solutions Global to run a 3 Day Mindful Leader Program.

*The Mindful Leader Program is a public program designed for senior leaders to enhance their performance and well-being using mindful and self-awareness techniques. The three-day program provides techniques for investigating and developing attention, intention, perspective taking and new ways of being.*

Do you know anyone who might be interested? Click [here](#) to find out more.



### **Rising Strong** by Brené Brown

The physics of vulnerability is simple – if we are brave enough often enough, we will fall. This is a book about what it takes to get back up and how owning our stories of disappointment, failure, and heartbreak gives us the power to write a daring new ending. Struggle can be our greatest call to courage and vulnerability, our clearest path to deeper meaning, wisdom and hope.

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