

Vulnerability at work – It has its place. Have you listened to Brene Brown's "[The Power of Vulnerability](#)"? Her honesty is refreshing. Brown shares bluntly the power of vulnerability, and her personal journey/battle, to/with vulnerability.

From an HR standpoint the sexy talk of workplace culture, creating an environment that supports vulnerability, is prevalent.

With recent trends in HR moving to a more open work culture, business's today find themselves asking the question: How can we create safe environments where employees can be vulnerable. We find that the answer for many is unsure.

Society and social media rejoices in the "vulnerable." Yet we are a generation that curates our lives online. Never before have we seen a young generation dealing with the high levels of self degradation, depression, loneliness and separation.

Brene Brown's research showed her that "vulnerability" came from the ability to connect authentically. "Connection is why we are here and it is what gives meaning to our lives."

*"The opposite to connection is shame – and shame is really the fear of disconnection."
Shame leads to "Im not XXXX Enough" and what underpins this is vulnerability.*

When we build a workplace that values connection (and thus vulnerability) know that the ability to connect, or not connect, is something that is intrinsically human.

In order for connection to happen we have to allow ourselves to be seen. It also means we have to know deep down, we are accepted and safe.

Brene Brown suggests that in her research there are two group of people. 1) Those who have a strong sense of love and belonging and believe they are worthy of love and belonging and 2) those that fear that they are not worthy of love and belonging.

How to build a vulnerable workplace?

Accept and expect that your company and your workplace will have people from group 1 and group 2. Acknowledge that everyone is not the same, and everyone connects differently. Your employees have different perspective, cultural norms and priorities. What can be vulnerable and scary for one person to share, might be totally normal for another.

Provide communication training to your entire company, not just your leaders and your managers. Build conversation parameters for your employees and set communication norms. Help your company by designing a communication alliance. It can be as simple as suggesting what type of conversations belong in your workplace and how to handle a situation when you find yourself in a conversation you are not comfortable with.

Be present. Be aware of the culture of communication you are building . Know the different types of personalities and know that one size doesn't fit all. If you or one of your team members are a facts based person who likes to control and predict, this step into vulnerability can be harsh, ugly and hard work. Know that what looks like surface level conversation to one person might be the deepest they have got to sharing in a professional setting to another.

Why Build workplace that encourages Vulnerability?

In our last blog post, "[How to Reduce Loneliness in the Workplace](#)", we discussed the impact of loneliness on employees and social connection. We know that humans are naturally social and vulnerability is an important step in making social connections. Creating an environment where employees feel safe enough to be vulnerable opens the door not only social connections, but engagement, productivity, understanding, cohesiveness etc.

We know that when we create a safe environment, we allow our employees to be vulnerable. Saying "I don't know the answer" can be safe. It invites others to share their ideas and collaborate.

Importantly, encouraging leaders to be vulnerable and build personal connections helps them to understand employees better. In turn this makes employees feel valued and important.

Finally, inspire your team to be vulnerable. Allow them to share a dimensions of themselves that makes them who they are, such as their challenges, interests and hobbies. This creates an engaging workplace - and an engaged workplace is a productive workplace.