

The Power of Vulnerability: Why Hiding Hurts and Opening Up Heals

A quote by author Criss Jami once served as food for thought about a an important topic, quiet yet impactful in its presence, that is, *vulnerability*. It reads, *"To share your weakness is to make yourself vulnerable; to make yourself vulnerable is to show your strength."* While we may find ourselves paying attention this feeling, sharing weaknesses and those doubts about ourselves might feel like letting our guards down. And a go-to alternative hence becomes as the likes of hiding, masking or just a tiny bit of filtering to make any vulnerability hold a guard. While it might serve as protection, it also creates a distance in owning them or feeling comfortable in ones skin and without the layers.

Needless to say, We live in a world where such filters aren't just for photos they've become our emotional shields too. We crop out the messy parts, blur the imperfections, and try to show up as the polished versions of ourselves. And there comes the topic of vulnerability, often told about as something that needs to be avoided, held secret or pushed away. It's often seen as weakness, risk or an exposure deemed unsafe. And so, we hide.

But here's the paradox no one told us growing up,

What we think pushes people away our cracks, our uncertainties, our fears can actually be what brings us closer. Lets try to describe it this way:

Why do we hide vulnerabilities, an integral part of our existence with a rather strong armor?

From our younger days, many of us are subtly taught to "be strong," "don't cry," or "never let them see you sweat." These floating phrases are subtle at times, and explicit the other. Trying to understand how being vulnerable bring phrases with themes opposite to strength, we notice that expressing vulnerabilities or even feeling vulnerable gets equated with shame, rejection, or failure. Especially in cultures or families where emotions are tucked under the rug, we learn early that survival means protection and protection means hiding; ultimately connecting survival with hiding vulnerabilities.

Psychologist Brené Brown, who brought vulnerability into the mainstream discussions, mentions vulnerability as the birthplace of courage, empathy, and connection, allowing to remove that filter, and connect without a mask. This is deemed instrumental in forging genuine connections while connecting with oneself. We might then notice one thing about hiding, that its about fear. The fear of being judged, of not being *enough*, of letting people see the parts of us we haven't yet accepted ourselves.

□ But what if we don't share, what happens then?

Hiding our vulnerability doesn't make it disappear. It burrows deeper. We may start to feel disconnected, even in crowded rooms or close relationships. Conversations stay surface-level. We feel seen, but not really known. Heard, but not truly understood. And slowly, a kind of emotional loneliness creeps in, the kind where you're surrounded by people, but still feel alone.

Therefore, lets try this other lens,

Imagine someone you admire, someone who seems “put together.” Then imagine they tell you about their anxiety, their childhood wounds, or how lost they sometimes feel. You probably don’t think less of them. If anything, you lean in. You relate. You feel closer. You may not see the person on the pedestal that’s very high, for when things are all sorted and put together. But this pedestal is now reachable, very real and relatable with stories that are a whole, with all the challenges, strengths and journeys put together.

And that’s the hidden magic of vulnerability: it’s the bridge, not the barrier.

When we open up authentically, we’re inviting others to do the same. And the journey begins, of feeling connected, not by being perfect by being present.

Scroll through TikTok or Instagram close friends' stories, and you’ll find people speaking openly about burnout, identity struggles, mental health dips, and existential dread, with a surprising mix of humor and honesty. There’s a cultural shift happening, away from hustle culture and toward emotional intelligence, authenticity, and slow living. However, one can still find it hard to be vulnerable. And the other side of social media comes on the forefront, being perfect.

Maybe because while memes and reels help normalize the struggle, showing up vulnerably face-to-face still feels scary. What if they don’t get it? What if they pull away? What if I’m “too much”? And one of the suitable responses to these questions is that, *you aren’t too much, you are just real*. Perhaps, removing the degree, or the title we assign to the amount of expression would help us see as it is. While this view isn’t straight through a pair of rose tinted glasses, because rose tint is just another tint, nothing more or less than the ones our stories and images actually come in.

I leave you with this reflection:

When someone says, “I’ve felt that too,” or “I’m here even if it’s messy,” something inside us softens. That’s emotional intimacy, relatedness, and a sense of belonging, just like a safe and comfortable corner to stay and feel home. Afterall, being vulnerable means choosing to show up bit by bit, comfortably and honestly.