

*Vulnerability is the quality or state of being exposed; the possibility of being attacked, either physically or emotionally.*

In the last week, I've noticed so many Lovelies in our Hot Melt Sprint Group being vulnerable, asking for support and accountability, and admitting that everything isn't always "fine." This vulnerability takes an incredible amount of strength and courage. When you're putting yourself out there, you want to be met with people who are empathetic and loving, not be dismissed with platitudes about how you "won't be given more than you can handle", or to pull yourself up by the bootstraps.

It reminds me of the story of the Velveteen Rabbit.

'What is REAL?' asked the [Velveteen] Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. 'Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?'

'Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'

'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.

'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.'

'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?'

'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.'

--From *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams

When we allow ourselves to be most vulnerable is when we are most real.

When we're vulnerable, it puts us on a path to a healthier relationship with ourselves. We start to see things that we didn't want to see before or to confront, and we set ourselves free.

It also draws us closer to others and gives us a better relationship with the truth. It doesn't make it easier when we avoid things that need to be addressed in our lives.

Brene Brown said, *"Vulnerability isn't winning or losing, it's having the courage to show up when you can't control the outcome."*

We need to understand that while vulnerability can be the core of shame and unworthiness if we courageously go forward anyway in a safe setting, we can find joy, creatively find solutions, start belonging, and feel more loved. We find joy when we let go of the things that we've been holding onto and when we become willing to look for answers.

Psychologists say that being vulnerable helps you:

- make deeper connections
- gives you better knowing and helps you to develop your beautiful self
- gives you acceptance and empathy for yourself and others
- opens our eyes to other things
- teaches us to be okay with being uncomfortable

Brene Brown also said, "*Vulnerability is the most accurate measure of courage. When we shut ourselves off from vulnerability, we distance ourselves from the experiences that bring purpose and meaning to our lives.*"

Vulnerability is our greatest teacher. Without it we pretend, we put on blinders, and we're just "fine." Wearing a mask isn't going to get you the vibrant life you desire. It isn't shameful to be vulnerable, it's human, and it's a superpower.