Moving Forward: Modeling Vulnerability with Learners and Peers

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Learning Objectives

At the completion of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Define vulnerability and the benefits of vulnerability within the learning or work environment.
2. Explain how vulnerability is important to support equity, diversity and inclusion.
3. Propose techniques to successfully model vulnerability.

"Tell your story with your whole heart."

Brené Brown

What does vulnerability mean to you?

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What does vulnerability mean to you?

Vulnerability

- Webster Dictionary
  - Capable of being physically or emotionally wounded or open to attack
  - A feeling experienced during times of risk or emotional exposure

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Brené Brown

"Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're **never weakness.**"

"Vulnerability is not knowing victory or defeat, it's understanding the necessity of both; it's engaging. It's being **all in**."

"Staying vulnerable is a **risk** we have to take if we want to experience connection."

"Being vulnerable and open is **mutual** and an integral part of the **trust-building** process."

"When you shut down vulnerability you shut down **opportunity**."

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Additional authors

- Henry Cloud, PhD

  – Mutual sharing = bonding

- Roy J. Lewicki, Daniel J. McAllister, Robert J. Bies

  – Warmth and affection > judgement

- Margie Warrell, PhD

  – People crave interpersonal connection

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Vulnerability and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- Creates a safe space

- Promotes authenticity and sense of belonging

- Supports storytelling
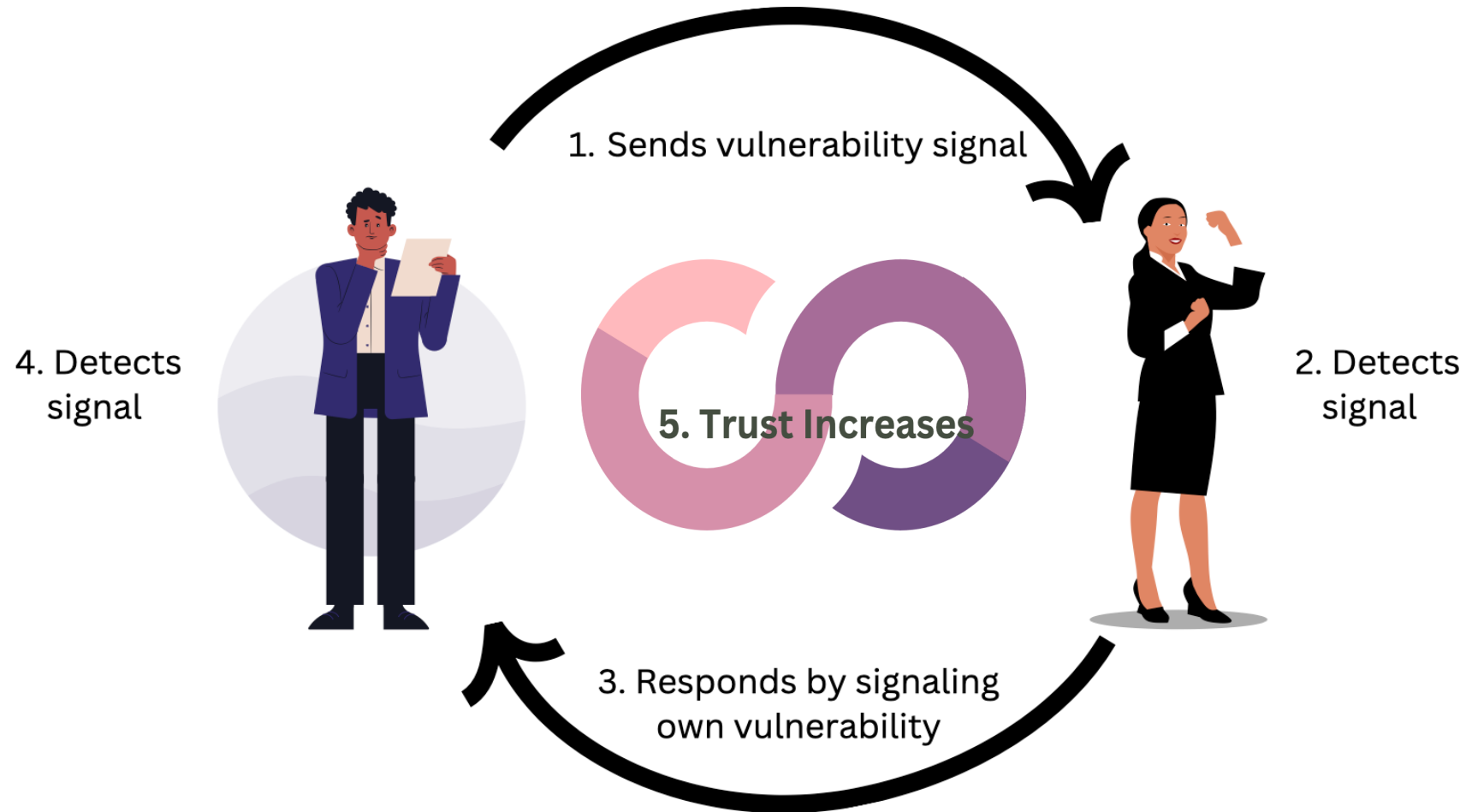
Barriers to Vulnerability

- Uncomfortable

- Perceptions of professionalism do not typically welcome vulnerability

  – Perfectionism in healthcare

- Damage to credibility or social status

- Negative past experiences of being vulnerable

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Breaking through the Barriers

- Self-awareness
  - Comfort with discomfort
- Creating culture of vulnerability
  - Psychological safety
  - Taking the initiative
- Acknowledge fallibility and imperfection
- Reasonable risk taking
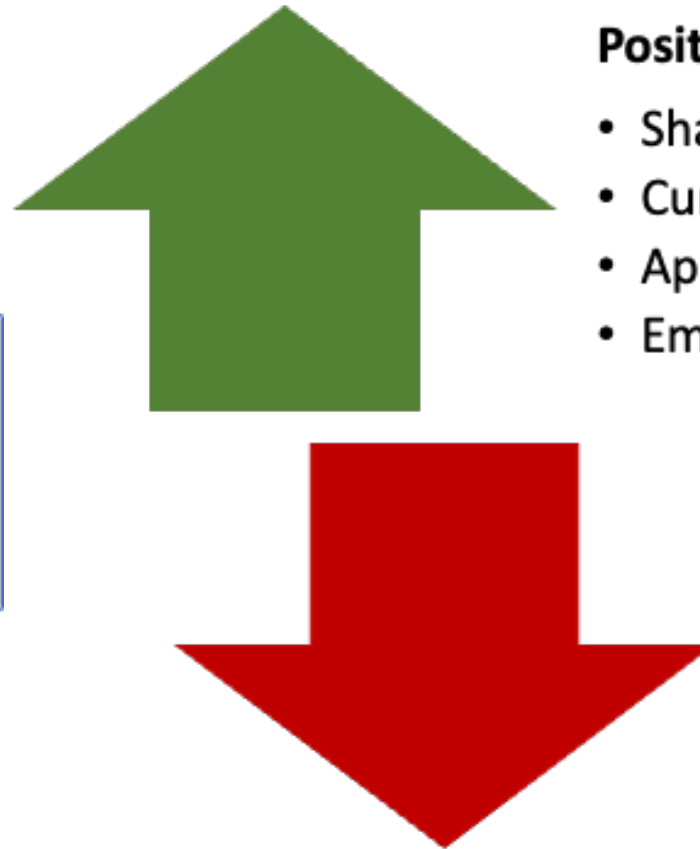- Challenging misconceptions about vulnerability

Vulnerability and Trust

Vulnerability Loop

Cues that others are being vulnerable
- Admission of weakness or struggle
- Reaching out for help
- Sharing an opinion or idea

Positive Response
- Sharing your own weakness or struggle
- Curiosity
- Appreciation
- Empathy

Negative response
- Defensiveness
- Criticism
- Rejection
- Ignoring vulnerability

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Getting Comfortable with Vulnerability

- Be intentional regarding audience and purpose

- Vulnerability is not the same as oversharing

  - OK to set boundaries

- Authenticity

- Vulnerability grows as trust grows

  - It takes consistency!

- Be mindful of others' vulnerability and respond positively

  - Act in a manner that is safe, supportive, cooperative

  - Listening authentically and actively

- Leaders should "go first"

  - Ask questions that encourage vulnerability

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Vulnerability Prompts

"What can I do to make you more effective?"

"What is one thing that I currently do that you'd like me to continue to do?"

"What do you think about this? I would love to hear your thoughts and ideas."

"I take full responsibility for that mistake. I was wrong."

"What is one thing that I don't currently do frequently enough that you think I should do more often?"

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Vulnerability Prompts

"I'm worried we won't be able to get this done in time. What are our other options?"

"I'm sorry I said that. I can see how it hurt your feelings and I regret causing you pain."

"I'm not sure I can handle this alone. Can you help me?"

"Thank you for sharing your story with me, this is how it made me think/feel."

"Have you ever done this before? I'm new at it and want to make sure I'm doing it right."

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Examples of Vulnerability

Learner	Both	Peer
• Improvisational learning opportunities (precepting or classroom) • Acknowledging if things don't go as planned • Discussing "tough" or controversial topics • Showing process of working through a mistake or uncertainty • Being open about feelings regarding patient outcomes and talk about how you process those feelings	• Asking for feedback • Sharing passion • Curiosity • Working on a project together • Expressing when something is hurtful • Expressing disagreement • Storytelling • Acknowledging barriers experienced by others	• Asking for help • Sharing stressors or weaknesses • Taking responsibility vs. Blaming • Giving praise and encouragement

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What vulnerability examples can you think of for the learning or workplace environment?

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What vulnerability examples can you think of for the learning or workplace environment?

Case #1 – Educator/ Learner

Dr. Poe taught the therapeutics algorithm for Acute Coronary Syndromes (ACS) for the first time. After the teaching day, students were confused and left class seeming overwhelmed. The next day, Dr. Poe started out with, "Ok, what questions do you all have about yesterday's material?" Students were visibly tense and no one asked any questions. Upon reflection, Dr. Poe realized that the previous day could have been done better.

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Case #1 – Educator/ Learner continued

Dr. Poe stopped class, took a deep breath, and stated, "I feel like I messed up. I think I didn't explain that section well. I can see how that would be really confusing. Can we go back over that?" Students visibly relaxed and opened-up with questions. Most of the class participated in real-time creation of a new flow chart with Dr. Poe. After class, students thanked Dr. Poe for being honest and going back through the material in a new way.

Breaking down case #1

- Risk to educator vulnerability is loss of credibility

- Learners are vulnerable by default due to status/role
  - Activities
    - Self-reflection
    - Performance evaluation
    - Mentee-mentor relationships
    - Admissions of lack in knowledge
    - Bottom rung of their career path ladder

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Examples of Educator Vulnerability

- Recruit students to do research

- Provide sense of humor

- Acknowledge mistakes and humanness

- Storytelling

- Share passions

- Ask students for feedback regularly

- Listen

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Case #2 – Peer to Peer/Workplace

Dr. Frost was approached by Dr. Faulkner to write a book chapter on a topic within their oncology specialties. Dr. Frost has never participated in a scholarly activity like this before but is aware it would be a great opportunity. They are apprehensive because this would be outside of their comfort zone, and internally doesn't even know where to begin authoring something of this magnitude.

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Breaking down case #2

- Stage might be flipped
- Potential damage to credibility
  - Leaders can set culture/tone
- Some may be receptive or may be critical

Over Boundaried
- Guarded
- Distant
- Withholding

Authentic Vulnerability
- Connection

Oversharing
- Too detailed
- Confusing
- Overwhelming

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Vulnerability Key Takeaways

- Supports EDI

- Situational

- Intentional

- Uncomfortable

- Spectrum

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What questions can we answer for you?