

Video Module: Discernment

Hi there. I'm going to talk today about vulnerability. I've been capturing people's life stories and helping them tell the origin stories behind their values for quite a few years now. Often when I talk about personal storytelling, people ask me what I think the secret sauce to a good story is.

From my perspective, the thing that I always share is that being vulnerable is the key to sharing a compelling story. When we choose to be vulnerable, it shows our authenticity, people are naturally drawn to authenticity, like moths to a flame. By being authentic and vulnerable in the way we tell our stories, we become more relatable in a very human way.

The interesting thing I find about vulnerability is—or, I don't know, I guess the guidance I give about it—is that being vulnerable means sharing that piece of information in your story where you're like, “I can't say that.” The reason why you think you can't say it can vary.

Maybe you're afraid it's going to make you look stupid, or that you made a big mistake, or you had a blind spot and did something that changed your character—something you wouldn't do today. The thing is, I invite you to listen to stories where people are being vulnerable and see how you react to that person. When they share that vulnerable piece, it's the thing people see as our greatest strength and courage.

I'm always kind of amazed and impressed by those of us who have the courage to be vulnerable. The thing is, as you share those vulnerabilities, you're able to deliver a lesson learned or a value you hold in a much more powerful way than if you dance around the truth of what is at the core of what makes you feel soft and tender.

YOURSTORY UNLEASHED

Now, the other thing that I talk about along this vein, and especially in a professional setting, is that you need to be discerning about which vulnerabilities you're willing to share. I'm not going to share the same level of vulnerability with my workmates that I would with my three closest friends.

That's the value of being in a storytelling cohort, or at least having a trusted story buddy, because it allows you to practice where your edges are and how tender or strong you are with that vulnerability.

If you're sharing something you haven't fully worked out for yourself yet, I don't recommend sharing it publicly. You'll discover that by sharing the story and those pieces of vulnerability with someone close to you whom you can trust to give safe, solid, and generous feedback, seeing how you emotionally react.

Once you find those edges, you'll know where you are with it and be able to share the vulnerability inside of you. When you do, you'll begin to find that your audience, whoever it is that you're sharing with—whether it's your team, your coworkers, or that boss you hope to impress in an interview—will view you differently.

That's the strength that comes from being vulnerable, which gives your stories emotional impact and leaves a lasting impression. It also promotes openness. As you're able to be open with others about those vulnerable points, you'll find that the people you're sharing your stories with might be more willing to open up to you.

All that being said, I hope you take steps to push that edge a little further each time as you share your stories and discover how far you're willing to go in different settings, showing your heart through your stories.