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## RYP QUARTERLY

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### **It is OK to be Vulnerable. Being Vulnerable is part of being a Leader.**

Of all the things that I get asked the most when mentoring a Leader – is to help them when they are feeling vulnerable. The chances are we will all feel daunted or overwhelmed at some stage in our lives. Challenging times will always impact our confidence. Life is uncertain. At some point, we will feel vulnerable, uncomfortable, and unsure of ourselves. This is a normal phenomenon. Life and Work will always see curve balls thrown at us. Life is not lived in a black and white setting, there are always shades of grey and uncertainty that we need to navigate through. The ability to work through self-doubt and uncertainty is one of the most important leadership and self-management skills for anyone to acquire.

#### ***Dealing With Uncertainty and Vulnerability Is an Important Life Skill***

Dealing with vulnerability as a leader is a crucial aspect of being human. Loss of confidence leads to a loss of motivation, which leads to uncertainty and a feeling of vulnerability. It should be seen as a life skill to develop, not a weakness in someone. We all need to develop our own formula for dealing with feelings of vulnerability. Indeed, the human spirit is the ability to face times of uncertainty and challenges with optimism and curiosity. But this takes courage, and it requires self-leadership.

When feelings of vulnerability consume you, it requires deliberate intent to overcome. It is not something you can ignore or ask someone else to solve for you. Likewise, you cannot overcome vulnerability alone. Here are some strategies and insights to help you navigate vulnerability.

**ACCEPTANCE:** None of us are bullet proof! Accept that vulnerability is a natural part of life. It is not an illness or a weakness. It is something that occurs to us all. A strength is to recognise when you are vulnerable. This is the first step to doing something about it. Having a personal lived experience will help you recognise the symptoms of vulnerability in others.

***Anything Worth Achieving will challenge your comfort zone. It is how we learn.***



**RECOGNISE TRIGGERS:** Recognise potential triggers that will fuel feelings of self-doubt and vulnerability in yourself. This will help you prepare for potential bouts of vulnerability, but also allow you to recognise early warning signs, which will enable you to deploy self-coping mechanisms. This will also help you recognise and predict potential triggers that may create self-doubt in other people.

**SHARE:** Share your feelings of vulnerability with close family members and trusted colleagues. This will help provide a sense of relief and a mechanism to release your fears and anxieties with people who can support you and “have your back.” This is not admitting weakness, but an act of courage! You will be surprised at how your true friends will offer support and good advice. Vulnerability is a shared experience – not a problem for you and you alone to solve!

**SELF-TALK:** Positive self-talk is crucial. Focus your talk on what you can and will do. Keep things in perspective. Challenge negative thoughts and disbeliefs and reframe your thinking into a positive light. Practice “above the line thinking” – what is possible, or what you can do, rather than what is wrong. Many problems may seem insurmountable at first. But taking small incremental steps each day is the way you get on top of feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt.

**LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:** Treat vulnerability as a learning opportunity. Learning can only occur when we step outside our comfort zones. Avoid going into a panic zone. Learning is everything you do. So, when feelings of vulnerability occur – treat it as a learning opportunity. Just as we did back at school when we were learning a new subject or acquiring a new skill.



**GIVE IT TIME:** It takes time to navigate through vulnerability. So, give it time, Be realistic. Set short term goals and celebrate them when they are achieved. Setting unrealistic goals or expecting quick fixes will only fuel more feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty when they are not achieved.

**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS:** This includes things that you enjoy doing, things you are good at, or things that will help relax and distract you. Exercise, yoga, meditation, hobbies, recreation, reading, and the like. Anything that fuels fulfillment or fills your personal contentment cup! This should be a daily occurrence! Treat that one simple thing you do each day for yourself as an act of self-respect.

**SEEK SUPPORT:** If feelings of vulnerability are severely impacting your daily life – seek support or professional help. There is no shame in doing this. Indeed, it is a mark of courage and common sense to do so. Remember elite athletes all have access to professional sports psychologists to help build their own belief and confidence in their ability to compete at the highest levels.

***Being Vulnerable is the ultimate act of Courage! - Brene Brown***

Self-Belief and a sense of hope is what motivates people. An ability to deal with vulnerability is a lifelong skill. Feelings of doubt and anxiety can occur at any stage of life and can be triggered by anything. Vulnerability is a normal human experience. Overcoming it requires a balance between awareness, recognition, acceptance, and positivity. As a leader, if you have a lived experience of how you have dealt with vulnerability, you will be well placed to support and coach others who are experiencing their own feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt.

**LEADERSHIP LESSON**

***Embracing vulnerability as a leader involves creating an inclusive and supportive environment where team members feel safe to be themselves. It is about fostering an environment of trust, empathy, support, and inclusivity.***

***To stand up straight with your shoulders back is to accept the terrible responsibility of life, with eyes wide open. It means deciding to voluntarily transform potential into reality –***

***Jordan Peterson***



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