

The What and Why of Naked Leadership

When I say a dad-ism at home, my kids say, “dad, that’s cringy.” The first time they said it, I didn’t know what they meant and after they explained it to me, I knew exactly how they felt. It was how I felt when a friend told me that to be successful, I had to take a naked approach. That’s totally cringy. So let’s eliminate all the assumptions you have about this word and let’s define what we’re talking about when I say *naked*.

What I mean is *vulnerability*. Vulnerability is one of the most undervalued and most misunderstood of all human qualities. Like being naked, being vulnerable, especially in leadership can be scary and feel embarrassing. However, **vulnerability is the key to relationships that last**. It’s the glue that holds relationships together, even through challenging times. And it’s safe to say that in your leadership there are plenty of challenging times.

There’s no better way to earn a person’s trust, than by putting ourselves in a position of unprotected weakness and demonstrating that we believe they will support us. As vital as vulnerability is, society encourages us to avoid it. We hear the messages to always protect our strength, show confidence, be poised. We often resist being naked at work, especially with those we lead because we think it’ll hurt our chances for success.

Although projecting strength is certainly advisable in some situations, avoiding vulnerability altogether keeps us from building that lasting trust. We fail to realize that it is ultimately our honest, humble and selfless way that will endear us to them and allow them to trust and depend on us.

One of the reasons there is such a deficit of vulnerability is because most people don’t know how to be vulnerable. It’s being honest with how we feel about a situation. It’s about our fears or concerns and asking for help. It’s owning up to mistakes. Asking that dumb question and just not taking ourselves too seriously. It’s sharing knowledge that someone could take and claim credit for and telling the truth, kindly, but telling the truth and giving an honest appraisal.

Vulnerability is not about using your team or colleagues as your own personal therapy group. There’s something uncomfortable and weird about airing all of your dirty laundry in front of the team. With all that said, you might understand this on an intellectual level, but most of us still struggle with naked leadership because we’re human beings who don’t like to be weak, which means we are subject to the completely natural but irrational fears that make us uncomfortable being naked. We’ll address those fears and strategies to move through them in the coming two lessons.

Just know this for now - **those who get comfortable being vulnerable or as we’re calling it here naked, are rewarded with levels of loyalty and commitment that other leaders can only dream of.**