

Vulnerability and Interdependence--Part 1

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If you are a long-time reader, you know how strongly I advocate that you be on the lookout for paradigm shifts. A noticeably big one occurred for me in the past two weeks, and I'd like to share it with you.

I'm an intense advocate of the Gallup organization's "StrengthsFinder Profile," an online assessment of 34 "talent themes." The assessment determines your five dominant "talent themes," which are your most naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior. Your genetics and early life experiences generated connections in your brain that are unique to you, and they likely won't change throughout your lifetime. They describe your predictable, sincere, routine responses to situations you experience. Because they are so genuinely "you," these patterns form the foundation for your natural strengths.

You can find out more about these concepts and the valuable assessment tool by going to my website (see below) and clicking on the "Article Archives" page. Scroll down alphabetically and click on the article entitled "Serve from Your Strengths." You can also go directly to www.strengthsfinder.com.

About two weeks ago, I met DeAnna Murphy, initially by way of LinkedIn, then by e-mail and phone. DeAnna is a recognized international expert on applying the results of the StrengthsFinder Profile to enhancing the performance effectiveness of individuals and teams. You can learn about DeAnna and her work from her website, www.strengthsstrategy.com. (Has changed to www.peopleacuity.com.)

I'm looking forward to DeAnna completing her book, tentatively entitled *Applying Strengths to Achieve Remarkable Results*. (Published as *Shift Up: Strengths Strategies for Optimal Living*.) She generously shared the Introduction and first chapter; I was blown away by some concepts she shares!

If you do a search of my "Article Archives" page for articles on interdependence and collaboration, you'll find dozens. Nowhere in any of those articles, however, will you find a reference to "vulnerability." Yet DeAnna made me aware of how vital vulnerability is to successfully moving from independence to interdependence. This new insight is my big paradigm shift!

Here's the simple way DeAnna describes it. "Strengths exist so we can make a difference in others' lives." No "Aha" there; the big awareness follows. "Weaknesses exist so that other people can make a difference in our lives. Both are necessary for interdependence." Acknowledging and "owning" our limitations is a huge piece of moving from independence to interdependence! That's a massive "Aha!"

Many leaders try to do and be everything, while they hide their limitations. Since others are aware that the leader is not really Superman, their trust in the leader weakens. The leader, meanwhile, sees others as being minimally productive and even disengaged. He wonders, "What's wrong with those folks?"

The potential for blame, criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and sarcasm is high. However, no one is in a better position to break the cycle than you, the leader. It takes a combination of confidence and vulnerability. And it takes discovering and becoming comfortable with your strengths AND weaknesses.

I've encouraged DeAnna to work quickly to finish her book. Her insights are marvelous, and I'm sure she'll provide us with plenty of "how to" guidance. Contact her through her website if you desire.

I am embarrassed and stunned at my oversight of the importance of vulnerability to a leader's interdependent growth with his or her team. Now I realize that maybe it wasn't just oversight. Could it be that I, like many leaders, have feared allowing myself to be vulnerable?

Would you like to understand vulnerability while we await DeAnna's book? I encourage you to go to www.ted.com and do a search for Dr. Brene Brown's "The Power of Vulnerability." Brene (pronounced Breh-nay) is a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. For the past dozen years, she has studied vulnerability, courage, authenticity, empathy, and shame.

Search elsewhere on the internet for her additional video presentations. They are powerful at stimulating us to authentically and courageously "show up" in our roles and relationships. Paradoxically, the more you show up confidently vulnerable, the more you are a role model, influencing those around you to do the same. It could be the beginning of genuine interdependence with your colleagues!