

Vulnerability Capacity

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Our conversations at Young Adult Group delve into the deep and vulnerable – struggles with the transition to life away from college, health, direction and purpose, and the deaths of pets and people and dreams. Still, I sometimes find myself wondering how much I can share. Based on some of the long pauses as we wait for someone to step into the silence, I get the sense that I am not alone in asking this question.

So. What is the vulnerability capacity of Young Adult Group and how do we expand it?

I'm guessing practicing vulnerability is the best way to expand capacity for it. Let me begin my vulnerability practice today by sharing some of my recent struggles with it.

A few weeks ago my parents came to visit and I felt torn between wanting them to know more about me and not wanting to answer the very questions that would allow them to know those important parts of me. I wanted to tell them how close I feel when my friends patiently teach me to sing, when I mind map a deep conversation we're having, or when we hike together without saying a word. But when my mom commented on how intimate singing and mind mapping seemed, I immediately clammed up and changed the topic to our dinner options. I found myself reacting the same way when she asked me to tell her more about a drawing I did of myself crying in a corner.

I'm not sure why it's so hard for me to talk about these things. After all, I think they are evidence of some of the best parts of me: the friendships I've helped to build and the way I work so hard to process my life – the joyful parts and the painful ones. Most of me is proud of those things, and I know my parents would be, too.

I'm reminded of Snape begging Dumbledore never to reveal his love (or obsession) for Lily and Dumbledore saying in response something like "What, promise to never reveal the best of you?" Maybe there's a little of Snape in me, too. Revealing my shadow side is certainly frightening, but sometimes revealing what I'm proud of about myself can be even scarier. Will it be celebrated? Or will it be waved away as insignificant?

Perhaps there's a little of this fear in us all. I wonder, what do other people long to share in Young Adult Group? How do we make a point of expanding our vulnerability capacity? Perhaps we can start by naming whatever it is inside us that we both

desperately want to share and desperately want to hide. We don't have to share it right away. But hopefully, by practicing small acts of vulnerability each week we can come to know and celebrate each other in the fullness of our humanity.