Can there be Courage in a World without Vulnerability?

Warm up

Ask students to take out a piece of paper/pencil and ask them: What do you think vulnerability is or how does one be "vulnerable?" Take 1 minute to write down your definition of vulnerability!

Have students share in a group or partner up and build on each others' definitions, then share as a class.

Write student answers on a whiteboard that all can see as they are shared aloud!

Misconceptions on Vulnerability

Compare the board to the definition we will use for today which comes from Dr Brene Brown: Vulnerability is uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.

Now relate Dr Brown's definition to responses you collected and find any matches. If some responses are far different have those students who shared them see if they can tie them into Dr Brown's definition.

Using these same responses try to tease out (according to Dr Brown) some misconceptions about vulnerability

- Did students see it as a weakness, why?
- As a bad thing we should be avoiding? Why would you avoid vulnerability? Past failures?
- Why do people avoid taking risks?
    - No control over a situation!?

Isn't lack of control over a certain outcome uncertainty!?

-Discuss the emotions that come with uncertainty and how it makes people feel

Courage Connection

Now pivot to have students think of times when they were courageous, or saw other people be courageous…. 1 minute.

Wikipedia definition of courage: Courage is the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, *uncertainty*, or intimidation.

Notice how the word uncertainty rears it's head here too.

When you show courage, you're being “brave,” taking a risk when you don’t know what the outcome is going to look like. Would you say you grow because of your courage?

So, using your examples of courage did they involve uncertainty, risk or emotional exposure? Only one? All of the above? Probably!

If students think their example of courage did not include those three traits, then they can discuss and debate.

Reflection

Therefore, can one be courageous without also being vulnerable?

Why then is there this stigma around vulnerability? With the way our society celebrates courageous people, why do we have these preconceptions about vulnerable people?

Do you see the stigma being more around those who emotionally expose themselves vs others who just take day to day risks that are plagued by uncertainty?

Will you think differently of vulnerability going forward?

Aside: If being courageous is celebrated, so should vulnerability! Just like if being courageous is associated with growth vulnerability should as well?

Extra:

If class time allows additional discussion questions could include:

What emotion would you say has people feeling the most vulnerable?
- Interestingly enough, According to Dr Brown, Joy is!
  - https://youtu.be/RKV0BWSPfOw

How can there be so many different definitions of courage?
- From Socrate’s Laches, this video should get students thinking about this question
  - https://youtu.be/HfufFsnxB_8
- Is foolish endurance still courage?

Are creativity and innovation possible without vulnerability? Don’t expect any!
- In reality vulnerability is still seen as weakness, to societies detriment!
  - https://youtu.be/e257BL851Uw
- Why is there no creativity without vulnerability?
- Do you think success only comes from “courageous cultures?” Why?
- What boundaries do you think need to be set for healthy, vulnerable, relationships?