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## Vulnerability As Strength

We are hard wired for connection. Studies show that friendship actually extends people's lives. Feeling a part of a community decreases blood pressure and has positive health effects. So why is connection so challenging? Why are marriages half doomed to failure? Why is connecting over the internet, from our respective homes, so pervasive and popular? Why all the medicating of "social anxiety"?

I watched an amazing talk on Ted.com that highlighted one woman's research into the topic of connection. In her research she found that the only difference between people who felt loved and connected and a part of something was that they believed they were worthy of feeling loved, connected and a part of. That's the only difference. The rest of the people struggled against a feeling of unworthiness. A shame that unraveled connection that deep down inside of them was a fear that something about them wasn't worthy of connection and will surely be rejected.

The other remarkable finding was the issue of vulnerability. People that felt connected accepted the act of "being vulnerable" as a necessary part of human endeavors. They all had the courage to be imperfect in the eyes of others. They were willing to say I love you first, they were willing to invest in a relationship that might not work out, they were willing to breathe through the discomfort of the unknown. People who struggled with feeling connected railed against the idea of vulnerability. They described it as being excruciating and avoided it at all cost. Sound familiar?

I think it is an evil thread that pervades our culture that we have to be perfect to be worthy. Worthlessness is at the root of many depressions. The idea that our imperfections make us beautiful is something I want to bring into the new year. The only thing keeping us alone is our fear that there is something so wrong with us that we have to go to endless measures to keep ourselves hidden. I want to experiment with vulnerability and see it as a courageous act instead of something to be avoided at all costs.