

# How to Be More Vulnerable in Relationships

Many people struggle to be vulnerable in relationships because it means opening themselves up to rejection or ridicule. But not allowing yourself to be vulnerable with friends and loved ones can lead to you missing out on deep personal...

## Part 1: Defeating Your Fear



1.

**Make a list of reasons you're afraid to be vulnerable.** Think through some of the reasons you're afraid to show your true self in a relationship. Ask yourself what you fear most from being open with someone. You may be trying to avoid getting hurt or trying to avoid hurting the other person in the relationship. Your ego may be preventing you from revealing what you see as weaknesses. Maybe you've had bad experiences opening up to others in the past. Be as honest as possible with yourself as you analyze your fears.

1. It may help to write it down on a piece of paper so that you can more clearly visualize your reasoning.

2.



**Focus on the positives.** There's a lot to gain from being vulnerable with someone, like a deeper sense of connection, more trust, and greater contentment. Focusing on these outcomes will help you get past whatever fears you may have. Find activities that help you stay positive, whether it be exercise, meditation, or journaling.<sup>[1]</sup>

3.



**Talk to someone who truly cares about you.** Seek out a friend or family member who you feel most comfortable opening up to. Share with them the concerns you have about being vulnerable with others. They may be able to provide a perspective you haven't seen before. This can also serve as a rehearsal for being more open with someone else.<sup>[2]</sup>

4.



**Seek professional help.** If you're struggling to deal with opening up on your own, don't be afraid to talk to a licensed therapist. They can help you work through your issues, either by simply listening or by giving you advice. Share the list you made about why you're afraid to be vulnerable or any past experiences that led you to feel this way.<sup>[3]</sup>

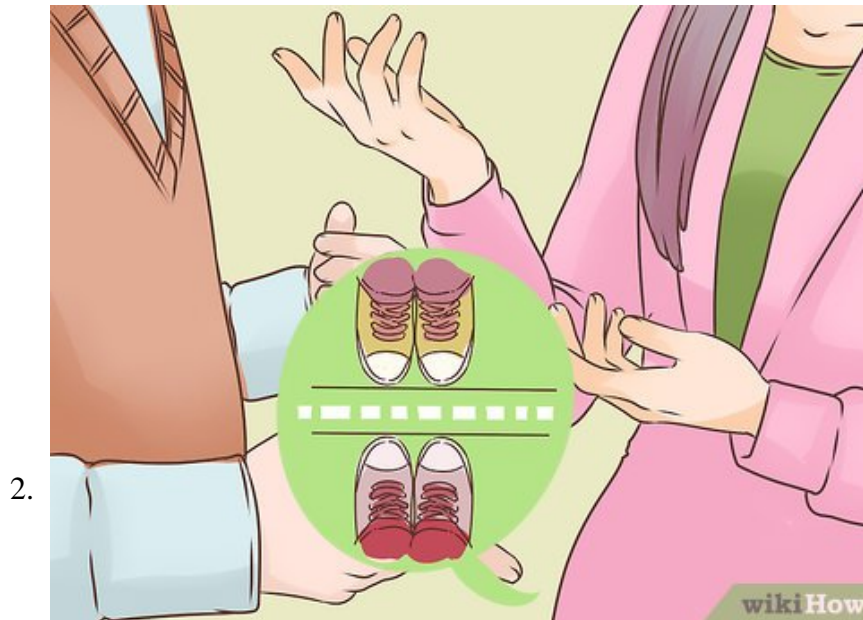
## Part 2: Opening up to Someone

1.



**Start gradually.** Pick one thing you want to share with the other person in the relationship and start there. Don't try to share every worry and fear you have at once. This will overwhelm both you and the other person.

1. Try starting with something small, like sharing a worry you have about your career or a concern you have for a family member. Or show the person a hobby you've been working on that not many people know about.
2. For some, it is easiest to start sharing with someone who has shared personal or intimate details with you already. That way, there is more balance in the dynamic.



**Set boundaries for conversations.** Start difficult conversations by stating what you want from the other person. Ask them to simply listen if you just want to vent frustrations. Be clear about whether you want advice. This can help you feel more in control if you're anxious about what you're going to share.<sup>[4]</sup>

1. Try starting with, "I'd really like to get all this out before you say anything." Or ask, "Can I just vent right now?"



**Admit your fear of vulnerability.** Be honest with the other person in the relationship about your concerns. Talk about any past experiences that have led you to want to hide your feelings. This will allow

them to understand why you may hesitate to share your feelings. And they will know that you're trying to improve your communication.

1. After admitting your difficulties, try using a phrase like, "I'm working on it." Request that they point out instances in the future where you could open up more.



**Reveal a mistake you've made.** Tell the other person something you did wrong or are ashamed of. Everyone makes mistakes, and it's likely the other person will be able to relate to it. People are drawn to others who are authentic and down-to-earth, so don't try to hide your imperfections.<sup>[5]</sup>

1. If you're ready for it, you can reveal something big, like a mistake that ended a past relationship. But even something small can help. Keep a mental log of interactions during the day that could have gone better. Maybe you were rude to a stranger and regret not being more kind. Revealing this shows the other person that you're reflective and conscientious.



**Admit if you don't understand something.** Everyone wants to appear knowledgeable, but pretending like you know everything comes across as arrogant. Ask the other person to explain something to you if you don't get it. This will earn their respect and boost their confidence while also showing that you trust them.<sup>[6]</sup>

1. You could ask them to explain a complex political issue or something they do at work that you don't understand. Or request that they teach you a new skill, like cooking or playing a sport.
2. Don't be afraid to request feedback and opinions on interactions with others. This can help clarify points that you don't understand, and give you specific areas to focus on next time.

6.



**Share your feelings while they're happening.** Bottling your emotions can lead to anger and frustration. But admitting that something is bothering you can help you address the problem immediately, and the other person will see your attempt at honesty.

1. You don't always have to speak your emotions. You can write them down or express them through music as a way of communicating them to the other person.<sup>[7]</sup>

7.



**Reinforce your open behavior.** It is likely that the other person will be receptive to you, and you will feel comfortable opening up more. But even if you don't get the reaction you wanted, you still overcame your fear and found the courage to be vulnerable.

1. If you appreciated their response the first time, thank them for being receptive to you. If their response was hurtful, share those feelings with them so they're aware of how their reaction affected you.
2. Verbally expressing emotions helps you overcome them more quickly, so whatever the outcome, you've still done something good for yourself.<sup>[8]</sup> Be proud of the steps you've taken to be more authentic, and repeat the behavior in this and other relationships.
3. Take note of how the interaction went, and see if your fear was justified based on the experience. Often, your fear will be greater than the experience, itself.

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