



## IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO BE CONNECTED THAN TO BE CORRECT

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When we stop caring about what people think, we lose our capacity for connection. When we become defined by what people think, we lose our willingness to be vulnerable. If we dismiss all the criticism, we lose out on important feedback, but if we subject ourselves to the hatefulness, our spirit gets crushed.

—Brené Brown

I have a dilemma for you, and like many dilemmas, it's a false one. (In other words, it's not really a dilemma, but I'm making it seem like one.) Here you go. Pick one.

You can be right, or you can be happy. Choose.

Now, consider how quickly you picked “be happy.” I know that's the one you chose, and I think most of us really believe that. However, the behavior I see in the world tells me that we actually choose “right” far more often than “happy.” Want evidence? How many people do you know who will hold a grudge for *decades* just so that they can be justified in being right about a situation? Or how many people will stay stuck in a horrible job or a dysfunctional relationship because they need to be right about being “safe”?

One of my favorite writers is Brené Brown, who also has one of the *most* frequently viewed TED Talks of all time, with about thirty-one million views (“The Power of Vulnerability” at [www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)). In it, she describes herself as a “shame researcher.” She tells us—pretty directly—that our most basic

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human need revolves around connection. We deeply need connection to others. However, we sabotage ourselves regularly in getting connected because *real* connection is based on vulnerability. We are terrible about owning our shortcomings, flaws, and places we see ourselves coming up short because somehow we won't "stoop to be vulnerable" in order to get past our own image of ourselves and build real connections with others as a result. I see misery, shame, loneliness, and depression all the time in others (even myself at times) because we stink at vulnerability.

As a result, our basic need for connection is missed. We're not able to make those connections because the individual we bring to the conversation isn't real. It's a made-up facade, a persona.

Think about going on a first date. I've been married to my high school sweetheart since we were twenty years old. It's been a long time since we went on our first date! So you're going to have to help me here when it comes to first-date preparation. What do you spend time doing? For us guys, and I'm going to generalize here, we will spend a significant

amount of time cleaning the car. We'll take it to a "spa for cars," and they'll wash, wax, primp, polish, vacuum, and deodorize until our "mobile image machine" is perfectly put together. We'll shower—we may get a new shirt, and we may get some new hair products—but most of our attention is on the *car*. For women (again, not only am I generalizing, I'm also projecting here), I'm guessing you spend a considerable amount of time making sure *you're* put together—the right hair, makeup, nails, shoes, handbag. *You* want to have the right combination of looks.

Then the first-daters send their images out on the date to see how it goes.

So how did it go? Did you *really* connect, or were you more interested in being correct? Interesting question, no? From what I see, *most* first dates are somewhere on the unbearable to disastrous scale because "you" weren't really there. You were someplace else; you sent your persona instead. Getting connection—that's where joy is. That's where true fulfillment is. That's where there are feelings of being valued and important and making a difference for others.

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Do you want to have the world work a little bit better? Do you want relationships to work a little bit better? Do you want to make better decisions? Do you want to feel more connected? Get connected. Be vulnerable and send your real self into situations.

### **Questions, Insights, Implications**

1. What tradeoffs do you see related to the following idea: You can be right, or you can be happy—choose one.
2. Watch “The Power of Vulnerability” TED Talk. What themes from Brené Brown’s talk speak to you most deeply? (Go to [www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability).)
3. When have you experienced a lack of our most basic human need—connection—in your life?

Again, reflect on these questions, and allow yourself to be wrong and to be open to new perspectives. By doing so, you’ll likely find new insights in the most unexpected places.