

# How to be vulnerable.

April 19, 2016 | 24 upvotes | by [marmar80](#)

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- How old are you and how familiar are you with RPW? 35 years old and really new to RPW (6 weeks)
  - What is your relationship status? Married
  - What is the problem? (Don't badmouth your SO!) The problem is me and not knowing how to be vulnerable. I'm having trouble letting down my walls (high dominance). My mom wasn't and still isn't vulnerable and I don't make friends easily so I don't know what being vulnerable looks like. I realize if I knew how to be vulnerable I would most likely have more friends. My problem is displaying vulnerability outwardly.
  - How have you contributed to the problem? I'm a controlling perfectionist who is very fearful. I am fearful that if I let my wall down I will appear weak. I have always had anxiety and allowing myself to not care about everything seems dangerously scary to me.
  - How long has this been an issue? My whole life, so at least 30 years. I sucked my thumb for comfort until I was 6 years old. I have now replaced thumb sucking with control, anxiety and biting my fingernails.
  - What have you done to resolve this problem? This is what I need help with. What are the behaviors or steps to being vulnerable?
- If married or in a committed, monogamous relationship:
- How long have you been together? 9 years
  - Is your relationship long-distance? No
  - Do you have an active bedroom life? Better in the past 6 weeks than the last 7 years. I still need to work hard in this area.

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## Comments

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BeautifulSpaceCadet • 11 points • 19 April, 2016 04:04 PM\*

### Practicing Vulnerability

To be vulnerable is absolutely a *skill* (yes, a skill) that must be practiced for those of us who weren't raised already knowing it.

It's a hard skill to practice, because an inherent risk must be performed, and not just any risk. It's the risk you are most afraid to take, which is how you wound up in this situation in the first place.

You're afraid to open up. You're afraid to give someone the power to break you. You're afraid to trust someone else with your emotions and know exactly what to do when they do. You're afraid to take your well-being out of your own control. You're afraid of what it means to depend on someone for your happiness. You're afraid of what it would take out of you to begin to even accomplish this, and you don't want to perform one risky behaviour to engage in yet another (lowering your defense for the sole purpose of being indefensible).

Maybe not all of those apply, but I would wager at least the majority do. And it's a wise fear to be sure, there's nothing irrational about it.

But it's important to realize that this fundamental lack of trust, which is exactly what it's produced by, is a disservice to you and your relationship and the connection you and your partner *both* crave.

And that list I made above of everything you're likely afraid of? It's also well-founded. And that point I made about being afraid of him not knowing what to do with your emotions? Well he won't. Firstly because he's only human, and secondly because he's not accustomed to being trusted with them, and it will be a learning process for him as well. Be easy on him as he initially fumbles, and by practicing vulnerability you will find in him a fierce protector of your emotions and feelings.

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**"Bring him your problem, not your solution".** We say that a lot around here, though it's not always directly meant to enhance vulnerability, but that was a huge step for me in helping me get there, and a very bite-sized step as well. Instead of thinking I know best all the time (*nobody* does), I trusted him with the problem and let him propose a solution to me; it's almost always better than the course of action I would have chosen myself! My SO is so analytical, and he definitely has my best interests in mind. He can offer a detached perspective and form a rational response as opposed to an emotional one. Your man can do the same, I assure you.

**Learn to express yourself.** Start small! But learn to say when you feel anxious, when you feel disappointment, when you feel anything...just say it! Happiness as well. Let him know every time he has made you happy that day. If he hasn't, then fix your damn attitude and start looking for all the wonderful things he has *certainly* done. Did he go to work? Did he do anything to keep the home running? Did he take care of any critical responsibilities? Don't allow yourself to get caught up in score keeping (and dismissing things he has done because you've done 'more'). Evaluate every action he makes *independently* and praise him based on those, he deserves it.

**Expect him to resist your efforts.** Yup, that's right. It's kind of messed up that you're going to try this hard, and he is going to push back instead of support you. Why would he do that?? Well probably he won't believe you've changed. It will take months for him to have faith in a true transformation, *months*. You cannot undo all the hurt you've caused him in a few short days or weeks of being Polly Pleasant. He is going to push back, and test you. He wants to know this is a real you, and not a cheap facade that will crumble at the first sign of trouble. Which in the beginning, it will be. But just keep building that back up. Again. And again. And again. And again. *Keep*

*moving forward.*

**Praise his leadership and masculinity.** Except to do that you'll first have to learn how to allow it to happen, and how to recognize it when it does. You've likely stifled it for so long it's a real effort for him instead of a natural flow as it should be. I wrote this comment recently, and though the context is a bit different, I think it gives you a good sense of the language you will want to use. I have said every single one of those sentences to my SO, and the principles of each are applied daily to our relationship. I truly believe them, but I do believe taking the time to reaffirm my own feelings and expressing them is a positive feedback loop for the both of us.

**LISTEN TO HIM.** This is so simple, so important, and so hard. Stop fucking talking. You've had your turn to talk for the last how long? Stop it. Stop it now. Listen to the words he is saying. Not just hear him speak, *listen*. Repeat what he says, and don't add your own commentary. If it sounds awkward, refer back to the point where I say to *tell him how you feel*. You can say "Babe, I want to listen to what you're saying instead of just dismissing you, but honestly it feels really awkward. Which makes it even more important I practice! Please don't mind if I keep repeating you to make sure I'm understanding what you're trying to tell me." It all works together!

**Practice a gratitude attitude.** I touched on it above. But consciously exert the time and energy into noticing all he does. I assure you, he does plenty. And remember, "what gets rewarded gets repeated". Don't call out the behaviour you don't want constantly. That will tear down his spirit and why would he put in the effort to make you happy when it's never recognized? Instead praise everything you can find to praise, and you will both benefit from your positive attitude and graciousness.

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I hope you found this helpful. It truly is worthwhile endeavor, and what you lose in defensiveness and walls, you will gain ten-fold in the richness of your relationship and the profound connection you can share with another person.

littleteafox • 7 points • 19 April, 2016 04:25 PM

This should be it's own post! :)

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 5 points • 19 April, 2016 04:29 PM

Thank you!!! Maybe I can flesh it out a bit more and do that? Paging /u/PhantomDream09 for opinions. Perhaps in a couple weeks? I don't know. Either way I'm flattered (:

[deleted] • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 04:40 PM

Hey there, I think this definitely has the potential to become a separate post! It sounds like you have a lot to share on this topic! My recommendation would be to post the second part of your FR, and then wait a few days to submit a new thread on this topic (just to spread out the activity/content a bit).

Keep up the great work!

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 04:41 PM

Trust me I thought of that d:

I will do P2 tonight and then give some other voices a few days to pipe up haha

[deleted] • 5 points • 19 April, 2016 04:44 PM

Sounds great! :0)

I'm glad you have all this enthusiasm right now.

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 7 points • 19 April, 2016 05:11 PM

I am too! I was always kind of, around the other sub, and definitely loved it. But this one fosters such an awesome atmosphere that frankly just offers inspiration everywhere. I didn't know I had this much to say until all the other users were saying their own great things that really creates some creative inertia (:

[deleted] • 5 points • 19 April, 2016 05:14 PM

I agree entirely, there were a lot of things we wanted to add to the community in terms of focus, and content. We will still be honest, but we also want to nourish the positive/fun/communal side of things a lot more. Fortunately, the relocation has made a multitude of things easier.

Everyone seems to be happier all around, which is great. :0)

payncake • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 05:00 PM **[recovered]**

Thank you very much for this post. I have been reading through Surrendered Wife and I feel like your post strongly complements the topic of letting the man make the decisions, which I struggle with. Saving this for future re-reading :)

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 04:54 AM

I'm so glad you enjoyed! Rereading it I'm a little surprised it even made sense since I wrote it at such an early hour d:

I haven't ready SW yet but I read SS and really want to move onto that one -- I keep starting and stopping it haha. Alls I know is relinquishing control over decision-making has been more like a gift to me than a loss of anything. My SO is such a capable leader and always does right by us -- it leaves me more brainpower to think of ways to show appreciation (:

TyrianPlum • 4 points • 20 April, 2016 12:23 AM **[recovered]**

Bring him your problem, not your solution

Ever heard that quote "Complaining about a problem without posing a solution is called whining"? What kind of situation would you use this for, and how can you avoid coming off as whining when taking this approach?

tintedlipbalm • 5 points • 20 April, 2016 12:36 AM\*

It's not complaining. It's talking to him about a problem. Complaining/whining focuses on the negative feelings associated with the problem and it's not geared towards finding a resolution. *Talking* to him about your problem is looking for a resolution.

What kind of situation would you use this for, and how can you avoid coming off as whining when taking this approach?

About the phrase you quoted, I think it's different advice for a different situation. Of course, I think endless whining is the worst thing you can do, but being able to talk about something troubling isn't necessarily complaining. The phrase implies any talk is complaining and sounds to me like more of a motivational business catchphrase than geared towards vulnerability in a relationship.

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 04:56 AM

This is a great distinction between the two. I'm a fan of that phrase they mentioned, but it's not a blanket statement for any criticism to be had of every situation. Many times things need working through and it can be done constructively. Well said (:

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 12:57 AM

Well I suppose it's the intention that changes it. Take the same situation twice:

A: "Oh my god, Jenna at work was being so annoying today. She was slacking and overly chatty, which not only distracted me from my work but piled more onto my plate! It's really frustrating and I hate having to deal with it."

VS

B: "Oh my god, Jenna keeps being distracting and off-loading her work on me. I'm not even sure how to handle the situation, but it's completely unsustainable and affecting my performance. How do you suggest I smoothly get a handle on it??"

There's also secret option number three

C: "Jenna at work is really being a pain and it's getting really hard to deal with. I know I can't do much about it since she's the boss's daughter and I have to tread lightly, but I would really appreciate you letting me vent for a minute about my day."

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FWIW, I do agree with the quote you provided. But I don't think it necessarily *has* to be perceived as complaining if you approach it tactfully *and* ready to accept and implement whatever advice may be offered. Plainly stating that you either 1) want a solution; or, 2) just want an ear, will also set the tone for the interaction straight off the bat in (IMO) a more constructive light.

eliza\_schuyler • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 06:12 AM **[recovered]**

I think /u/tintedlipbalm and /u/BeautifulSpaceCadet have given some great info in their responses, I'd just like to throw my 2 cents in.

My SO enjoys being involved in my decision making processes. Obviously not every little thing, but when something is troubling me he likes to be able to pose a logical solution. I benefit from his insight into a difficult situation, and we grow closer by sharing our trials and successes. He works long hours and we don't always get to spend a lot of time together, so this is one way that we become part of each other's lives.

I would definitely not advocate whining, bitching or over-analysing in the presence of your SO. I am fortunate that I have excellent female friends who are more than happy to indulge me in a bit of a rant on the odd occasion when I find it necessary.

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 06:29 AM\*

My SO enjoys being involved in my decision making processes. Obviously not every little thing, but when something is troubling me he likes to be able to pose a logical solution. I benefit from his insight into a difficult situation, and we grow closer by sharing our trials and successes. He works long hours and we don't always get to spend a lot of time together,

This sounds a lot like my SO and I. A lot. When I am bothered, he knows immediately. We always talk it out and work through whatever it is, and I always feel so much better after. But I do this thing where I insist there isn't anything wrong a few times in vein (pretty much as stereotypical as you're imagining it) -- and I don't know why I *always* do this! If I applied any thought in the moment I

would know it ends with me telling him and 99% resolving the issue...So why do I always do that 2-3 "no, nothing's wrong..." before the "ugh well it's just that..." It's so rationally foolish but I do it nearly every time.

so this is one way that we become part of each other's lives.

But then you say that and now I'm intrigued. I do understand that my SO and I grow closer because (other than my 2-3 step avoidance dance) we are very good at troubleshooting the conflicts in my life. And by we I mean mostly him lol. He's very good about helping me but I always initially try to deflect..You seem to regard this process as both positive long-term (which I do as well), but additionally as a positive interaction (which I do not). I'm thankful for the process, but I don't actively enjoy it. How is it that you do that?

If you have a few words to offer, I know I would love to hear the attitude you have that makes it enjoyable for you together..I could certainly improve in that area.

Edit: clarified a few sentences

eliza\_schuyler • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 06:41 AM **[recovered]**

I really try to avoid making any interaction a whinge. I think of it more as asking him for advice. I make sure I'm emotionally detached enough from the situation that I'm not going to cry or get angry, and I ask him in a respectful way, when I know he has time to chat about it.

He likes problem solving! He enjoys working through the options together to come up with a viable solution. I am also a very independent person, and I think that aspect of co-dependency is something that he enjoys.

I also save my negative and unproductive goings over of issues for friends or my sisters. It's good to have someone to talk to to get all the emotions out of your system before you approach your SO for his help in creating a solution. It's lovely being part of a Captain-First Mate dynamic in such a raw form. Does that answer your question?

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 5 points • 21 April, 2016 03:03 AM **[recovered]**

It does and thank you for writing it up (:

It's like....if I'm going to tell him a problem, and then he is going to approach it rationally to help me solve it. Why bother with the useless half step, which I'm sure is nothing but annoying to him.

I'm going to make that my focus thing to work on it. To just plainly say what's going on instead of the typical girly "oh it's nothing" (said in the tone of voice that implies it's clearly not nothing lol).

I appreciate you sharing (:

[deleted] • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 06:29 AM

THIS! This is awesome. As of today, I probably do about 10% of the above. I find that I can read this and want to do all of this, but implementation is hard, its so much easier to do nothing. I am highly sensitive, have a low threshold for emotional turmoil/pain and am so stubborn.

roboticyogi • 5 points • 19 April, 2016 10:38 PM

Have you seen Brene Brown's Ted talk on vulnerability? I don't know if it will give you explicit steps, but I think what it comes down to is: be grateful; have compassion for yourself.

[deleted] • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 08:39 AM

I had seen her talk a while back, but I think the timing for me to internalize it wasn't right. She is amazing and I have watched all her TED Talks and will be buying her books, *Daring Greatly* and *The Gifts of Imperfection*.

eliza\_schuyler • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 09:11 AM **[recovered]**

The first step to making this better is taking responsibility for the problem, and it sounds like you have done that! Could you elaborate a little more on how the problem manifests in your life?

Is the main issue that you struggle with making friends, or are your issues overflowing into your relationship? The more specific information that you can provide this sub, the more tailored to your situation the advice you receive will be.

[deleted] • 2 points • 19 April, 2016 09:44 AM

I'm more worried about how it is affecting my marriage. I withhold affection, I argue to be right, I rationalize my behavior and feelings and blame it on my SO and I pout. I'm closed to new ideas and its all because I'm scared. I want to be able to be soft, open, receptive, and pleasant but I don't know what those behaviors/mannerisms look like. I'm having a hard time letting go of control, being uncomfortable (during my transition to a RPW) and actually trusting that things will be okay. I want to be vulnerable with him.

eliza\_schuyler • 8 points • 19 April, 2016 10:58 AM **[recovered]**

To start with, check out the essential guides for this sub. Particularly /u/Kittenkajira's post on arguing and /u/TempestTcup's post on not letting your emotions rule your relationship.

Secondly, I can see you are trying hard to make a change, but you are not seeing results. Try this change of tack. For one week, stop focusing on you, what you want in a relationship and how you feel. Instead, shift *all* your attention onto your husband. Aim to make him the happiest you possibly can. Laura Doyle gives some excellent advice, but bringing it all in at once to an existing relationship may cause your partner to misread your excellent intentions.

So as an example, if your husband says something to hurt you this week, rather than say "ouch" and walk away, suck it up, smile, apologise, kiss him, or give whatever response you most think he would enjoy at that time. This isn't a solution forever, necessarily, but you must reset your relationship in order to begin making massive changes.

Keep notes or a little journal and at the end of each day write down at least one situation where you felt you increased your husband's happiness and sense of wellbeing. Write down at least one situation where you could have done better.

You may find that you enjoy focusing on someone else's wellbeing. For me, my SO being happy and content gives me joy in and of itself. However, you may be less deferential or submissive, and feel that you require a certain level of your own needs met *by* your husband. In this case, focusing your attention on him is still the solution. You will find he is more receptive to discussion about your needs when he isn't feeling cheated of his own. You may also find that he reciprocates your good will with his own.

At the very least, *please* try this approach for a week (after reading all the essential posts in the LTR section of the wiki!). It's only a week! I wish you all the best.

I'll leave you with the most important point last. He needs sex like you need attention. Give it, joyfully, willingly, always.



[deleted] • 6 points • 19 April, 2016 12:57 PM

I am very driven and motivated person, and pride myself in keeping the house clean and the kids well taken care of, thinking (and this is where I have trouble) that I am showing my love through acts of service. He doesn't care about that stuff (he does love his kids). Those are things I care about, therefore I am putting myself first by making them a priority over him (\*light bulb). He just wants affection and to be put first and this will increase his wellbeing.

Kittenkajira • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 06:18 PM

As a bonus all the affection will help you manage your fears.

eliza\_schuyler • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 10:12 PM [recovered]

That's totally understandable. I assume you have already discovered the 5 Love Languages! Do some research and discover how you can best show him affection, if you need some ideas. This is what I mean by putting him as your focus for a week! It lets you rethink *why* you are doing certain things- are they for yourself, or for him? Then you are able to choose which "you" things you continue with, and which "him" things are super easy (or even just attainable) for you to do and *keep doing them*.

You are totally going into this with the right attitude, and I believe that you will see results! Good luck.

[deleted] • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 05:59 AM

I own the book and read it about 3 years ago. I discovered what my love language was and what my SO were, but I continued to show my love through acts of service, which is not his love language, its physical touch. I need to be able to speak his language and I am incredibly stubborn to not realize this sooner.

eliza\_schuyler • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 06:06 AM [recovered]

Well, now you have both awareness and openness to change, you should be able to meet your husband's needs more easily. How have you been going so far? Are you making some notes as you go?

[deleted] • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 06:34 AM

I made sure I took the time to kiss him gently this morning before we went in to work (we work in the same building). I also made sure I touched his arm and back on the drive home last night. These were the positives but there are a whole lot of negatives that happened and will update everyone on after my one week challenge. Taking notes.

[deleted] • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 11:17 AM

Thank you. I have read a lot of what you suggested already, and will re-read as I am still working on being more open (thus things don't stick). I think this is an excellent start and plan to do all of it.

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 01:39 PM [recovered]

I think Eliza makes a great point about a week long exercise to kick your butt into high gear. I just did a one week 'No Bitching' Field Report challenge -- maybe something like that? It doesn't have to be at all like mine in how you approach it, just do your own thing and write it all down for a week to help you reflect.



I found it very helpful to have an invisible audience in how I behaved my relationship, and knowing that I was going to have to share all my ugly behaviour with you guys. You could do that on a note document on your phone for the next 7 days and then share your report with us for constructive criticism?

It was really, really helpful to me. Especially because I started each day by writing down my expectations, and then reported on how things *actually* went. We ran into plenty of inconveniences but they were much easier to handle gracefully knowing I was going to write down my reactions.

I would love to see something like this, especially for a newbie! You could learn a lot and it would be a really great share -- I hope you will consider it (:

[deleted] • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 01:56 PM

I absolutely think this is critical to my success. I am so wrapped up in my own head on whether I am being right or perfect that I don't remember what he says or even think about what comes out of my mouth. My first instinct is to argue back, tell him my point of view, fight to be right (ugh). This automatic defensiveness clouds my head and then I don't really hear what he is saying. I need to write it down so I know where I am messing up and what to work on (vetted here first). Thank you.

StingrayVC • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 02:00 PM

Step 1. Don't talk. Don't even think about talking when he speaks. Just listen. Put your hand physically over your mouth or drink water and hold it. Whatever it takes to simply listen.

Step 2. Acknowledge him. Not yourself. Make it known that you heard and understood what he said.

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 02:12 PM **[recovered]**

Vulnerability can also start with step one.

"I'm sorry baby, I know I've cut you off so many times in the past. Please know I am going to sit right here and listen to what *you have to say*, and won't interject with my own feelings. It may be a struggle at first but please support me as I try and repair the damage I've been doing to our relationship"

StingrayVC • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 02:23 PM

Absolutely.

StingrayVC • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 11:16 AM\*

I withhold affection, I argue to be right, I rationalize my behavior and feelings and blame it on my SO and I pout.

You are holding so tightly to control, that this is all going to break apart in your hands. You've got no room to move or to breathe. When something goes off kilter you simply snap because there is no place to bend (Ugh, I haven't been up very long. I hope this makes some sense).

You need to let go. At least a little bit. Things that are rigid tend to break. When you notice you are withholding affection, go up to him and rub your hand along his shoulders. This small movement might

be difficult and you are afraid, but you want to better your marriage. This is going to take some courage. Your arguments should not be competitions (and I know what you mean, I used to argue the same. Argue to win). Rather, your argument are a means to an end. A means for the husband and wife to work together to find the solution.

Rationalizations. These are tough, but doable. I think most women have an inkling of when they are doing this, only it's under the surface. Pay attention to when you do it. If you don't notice it in the moment, force yourself to face the truth after the fact and own up to it. Go to your husband and apologize and tell him the truth. Written it sounds easy, but I know it's not. Do it anyway. Being vulnerable takes courage. Do it for him and do it for you. You will become stronger and you will begin to see the rationalizations for what they are in the moment.

Blaming it on your SO. This just needs to stop. You are trying to protect yourself, but at the end of the day you are doing more damage to yourself and to your SO. Clamp your mouth shut if you have to.

Pouting. Well, this is just another way to make things easier for you. It is easier to pout that to stand up and apologize and face the truth.

Really, these all stem from the fear you mentioned in your post. You are driven by it. But, you don't face your fear. You fall into it because it is more comfortable in the moment. That short term comfort will bring you long term pain. You need to stand up and face what you are afraid of. This courage will bring the vulnerability you are looking for.

Typed out it sounds like I believe these things are easy. I don't. They will be very difficult. But they are doable. You need to stop trying to protect yourself so much and start protecting your marriage. That is a far more difficult thing to do. But you will get stronger through this and better yet, so will your marriage.

[deleted] • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 11:27 AM\*

I completely agree that I am rigid and lately I actually feel like I may snap. My SO has asked me to put him first for years, but I was so fearful that I wasn't listening. I put myself first (career, kids). Courage, courage in the moment. I've never thought myself to be courageous but I want to be. My SO woke up this morning and asked me "are you going to be a shit testing bitch like you were yesterday" and I went and pouted instead of just apologizing and giving him affection.

StingrayVC • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 11:43 AM

The thing is, you are afraid you're going to be hurt. *But you already hurt.* It can only get worse or get better. At this point, things are not going to hold steady.

If you go off and pout, because you forget in the moment or it's just too much, it is still not too late to apologize. You can go back, five minutes, 10 minutes or even hours later. You just need to apologize. And be prepared for not much of a reaction or even a poor reaction. At this point, he doesn't trust that you are going to change. But apologize anyway. It will get the ball rolling and it is the right thing to do. Then you are going to have to show him that you mean what you say. You truly are sorry and you show him this by continually working on your fear. You will fail, but you will also succeed. When you fail, own it. He will know you are trying and as you succeed he will begin to trust you again.

BeautifulSpaceCadet • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 01:43 PM [recovered]

This is hugely great advice. When I started here at RPW I made it a point to apologize always for ugly behaviour. No matter how much time had passed.

I told HB once "I'm trying here, and I'm getting quicker in my reaction time between acting

ugly and apologizing. Pretty soon I'll get that reaction time so quick, I won't have to apologize because I'll catch it first!"

He laughed but that's almost exactly what happened. I mean, it's not perfect 100% of the time, but it's pretty damn good.

StingrayVC • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 01:54 PM

I'm trying here, and I'm getting quicker in my reaction time between acting ugly and apologizing. Pretty soon I'll get that reaction time so quick, I won't have to apologize because I'll catch it first!"

Precisely! This is exactly the idea. Most men notice this effort and will be happy that you are *trying*. A real effort will be highly appreciated. I don't think most men require perfection, just concerted effort, as long as it's not too late.

I don't think it is too late for the OP.

Littleknownfacts • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 09:59 AM

Have you read Laura Doyle's *Surrendered Wife*? Many of the things you mention are right of the book.

[deleted] • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 10:26 AM

I have and I am implementing as much as I can (and rereading since I'm new at this). For example, when my husband says something hurtful I just say "ouch" but that has backfired because he takes it as "I don't care to respond", thus I don't care about him. I control my emotions and draw inside myself a lot, so I can see why he thinks I don't care.

Littleknownfacts • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 11:28 AM

Your example just sounds like growing pains. He's used to you responding a certain way, and now that your ways are changing he isn't sure what to think. It will take some time before he really understands the changes you are making and comes to believe that you are actually trying to make these changes rather than just adopting a new way of manipulating him.

Next time he says something like 'you don't care enough to respond' tell him 'your right, this isn't worth fighting with you about'. Consistency is key.

DebatePony • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 03:58 PM\*

This is something that I struggle with as well. I've always been pretty independent and while most of that time it isn't a problem, and is in fact something my husband loves about me, it can cause issues.

Here are a few things I try when I notice that I'm being controlling/annoying.

The first thing (and I think you are there already) is becoming more self aware. You know when you are doing the behaviors which you hate and even if you are in that midst of losing your shit, it isn't too late to salvage the situation.

When I'm fighting to be right: recognize that's what your doing, and either apologize, or turn it into a joke. Generally I like to do both, make a joke, then apologize. After I've noticed that I'm just fighting for the sake of fighting, I'll stop fighting back and say in a self mocking tone "well, I'm right, your wrong!" whilst sticking my tongue out at him. Then I'll go for a hug (comfort test?) and say that I'm sorry for the stupid fight and I don't really think I'm right.

If I notice I'm nagging (or as an attempt to make a request not nagging) I'll stop and say -again self mocking tone- "nag, nag, nag, complain, complain, complain" with a smile.

If you are fearful of your husband leaving you (something I also struggle with) remember that he has built his life with you and he isn't going to leave you for no reason. Accept that there is very little you can actually do (aside from making his home life amazing so he won't want to leave) to stop him. Just be the best version of yourself, one that he would never want to leave.

Sex, talk dirty to him as your making dinner, playing games, watching tv, then follow through when you get to bed. Complement him on his arms, height, how he can open cans for you, anything really. The dirty talk is probably harder if you have children...we only have a dog.

Anyway I don't know if this helps, good luck though.

geraldbaron88 • 2 points • 19 April, 2016 07:07 PM **[recovered]**

How don't you know how to be vulnerable when you're able to reveal details of your life online?

tintedlipbalm • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 10:23 PM

Being open anonymously to Internet strangers doesn't require much vulnerability.

geraldbaron88 • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 09:14 AM **[recovered]**

I guess I have made some progress. This is the first time I have asked for help

Yes, it is. OP is right. Reaching out to any form of social convention depicts vulnerability; and it requires a lot more than you think.

tintedlipbalm • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 04:54 PM

That's why I said "much", not "none at all". Anonymity is still way easier.

[deleted] • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 05:54 AM

I guess I have made some progress. This is the first time I have asked for help and I've gotten amazing feedback.

[deleted] • 2 points • 19 April, 2016 08:03 PM

There's a difference between stating things online, anonymously, in an effort to seek advice and feedback - and knowingly exposing yourself/being vulnerable/trusting someone that you care about and could easily hurt you if they decided to.

You may be interested in /u/Camille11325's post where she talks about dominance, and dominance thresholds.

geraldbaron88 • 2 points • 19 April, 2016 08:52 PM **[recovered]**

Then, I'll suggest: you don't open up. Don't do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. When you force it, it'll be awkward and you'd wish you hadn't said anything. The man likes you for who you are since he's already with you, it says a lot.

[deleted] • 4 points • 19 April, 2016 08:57 PM

The OP specifically wants to stop being so defensive, mistrusting, and embrace her vulnerability (as well as her ability to trust her SO). Those aren't bad things. No one is telling her to turn into a wilting flower, but vulnerability opens up new dimensions within a stable relationship.

There's always room for improvement, and there's nothing wrong with continuing to promote personal growth.

geraldbaron88 • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 08:42 AM **[recovered]**

I'm a controlling perfectionist who is very fearful. I am fearful that if I let my wall down I will appear weak.

OP stresses the fact that she is afraid of displaying weakness, to which vulnerability entails. She's been closed her entire life; administering unaccustomed practices may compromise her relationships with her SO and her friends. What I carefully advised was a safe approach.

[deleted] • 3 points • 20 April, 2016 02:50 PM

Improvement requires change. I'm not sure what advice you have given really, other than to say that her attempts to become vulnerable when she has not been in the past will potentially harm her relationship. That doesn't sound like actionable advice, or a way for her to move forward...just a warning to 'stay' where she is currently. I could have missed your other advice on the thread though, so a clarification on what you mean may help.

[deleted] • 5 points • 20 April, 2016 06:22 AM

My SO is pleading with me to let him in and because he loves me and I love him, I NEED to become more vulnerable so an even deeper connection can exist. Its imperative I grow in a positive manner. I've been "comfortable" for too long which is a detriment to my relationship.

tintedlipbalm • 3 points • 19 April, 2016 10:20 PM

Do you have any idea of how the path to progress can actually mean discomfort?

geraldbaron88 • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 08:58 AM **[recovered]**

Or it can lead to a loss (relationship, friends, work, etc).

tintedlipbalm • 2 points • 20 April, 2016 04:56 PM

Anything could. OP wants to improve this part of herself and being like "don't do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable" is not conducive to improvement.

Can you please get a flair? It's mandatory here.