

# Leadership & Vulnerability: Leading from the Heart

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The Association of  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
in Business

# Featured Presenter

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# Agenda

- ❖ Define vulnerability and why it matters
- ❖ Business case for vulnerability
- ❖ Assess your vulnerability current state
- ❖ Resources to help you grow

# **Vulnerability Defined & Why it Matters**

# My Vulnerability Story

- Could've titled my (in)vulnerability story
- Checked off all the boxes to be happy
  - Big4, promotions... “success”
- Inside, I was miserable

# Why am I sharing this story?

- Hope to inspire others through my journey
- Cornerstone of discovering our True Self
- What vulnerability made possible in my own life
- My heart has opened
- Legitimate business case for vulnerability

# Polling Question #1

What is your definition of vulnerability?

- A. Courage
- B. Weakness
- C. Openness
- D. At Risk
- E. Other

# Vulnerability is *Not*

- Being walked on
- Being emotionally unregulated
- Shirking responsibility
- Showing all your cards all the time



“

To share your weakness is to  
make yourself vulnerable; to  
make yourself vulnerable is  
to show your strength.

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CRISS JAMI

GRACIOUSQUOTES.COM



*"Vulnerability  
is a beautiful  
human quality  
that enables us  
and gives us the  
ability to grow."*

Brother Freedom



DARING GREATLY MEANS THE COURAGE

*to be vulnerable*

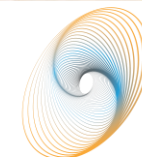
it means to show up and be seen.

TO ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED.

*to talk about how you're feeling.*

to have the HARD conversations.

-Brené Brown



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# What is Vulnerability?

- “Courageously open and honest with yourself and those around you...And in doing so, live and give with a full heart.”
- Leader’s responsibility to leave organization better than we found it
- Vulnerability begets vulnerability



# Business Case

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# The Business Case (Gallup)

- “Majority of workers globally (60%) are **emotionally detached or not engaged**”
- “**19% miserable or actively disengaged.**”
  - Paying FT wages to people engaged only PT!
- “Happier and more engaged workers can mean **23% higher profits**”

## Sources:

- <https://hbr.org/2023/10/creating-a-happier-workplace-is-possible-and-worth-it>
- <https://www.wsj.com/articles/accounting-graduates-drop-by-highest-percentage-in-years-5720cd0f>
- <https://www.axios.com/2022/08/12/workers-miserable-gallup-poll>



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# Polling Question #2

What do you think is the biggest driver of workplace happiness?

- A. Fair Pay
- B. Flexibility
- C. Inclusion
- D. Achievement
- E. Energized

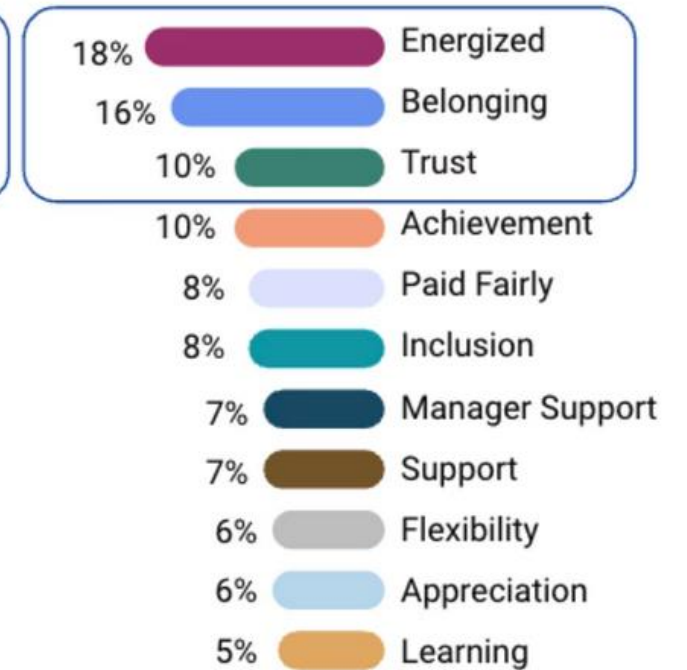
# Wellbeing at Work (Forrester Consulting)

- “We tend to be wrong about what will increase our work happiness.”
- “Perception of who is responsible for wellbeing in the workplace is shifting.”
- “Workplace wellbeing impacts individual wellbeing.”

**Stated Importance**  
What people think matters

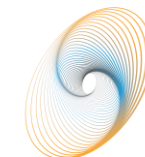


**Revealed Importance**  
What actually matters



Sources

- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/workplace-wellbeing>
- <https://www.axios.com/2022/08/12/workers-miserable-gallup-poll>



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# State of Accounting Profession

- Critical juncture
- WSJ Study
  - 300,000 accountants left the profession 2021-2022 (17% decline)
  - Dwindling numbers of students entering the profession
- Now is the time to embrace vulnerability and shift organizational cultures

Source: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-so-many-accountants-are-quitting-11672236016>



# Why should this matter to me?

“Average” worker

- **90,000 hours spent working** (Rand Corp)
- 45-year career span; EX: age 20-65
- In 45 years, there are 395,000 total hours
- **23% of your time at work; more than anything except sleeping**
- Invulnerability = inauthenticity = we suffer greatly

# Self-Assessment

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# Vulnerability SOP

## Ground Rules

1. Be honest with yourself
2. Answer from the heart
3. NO self-judgment allowed

# Polling Question #3

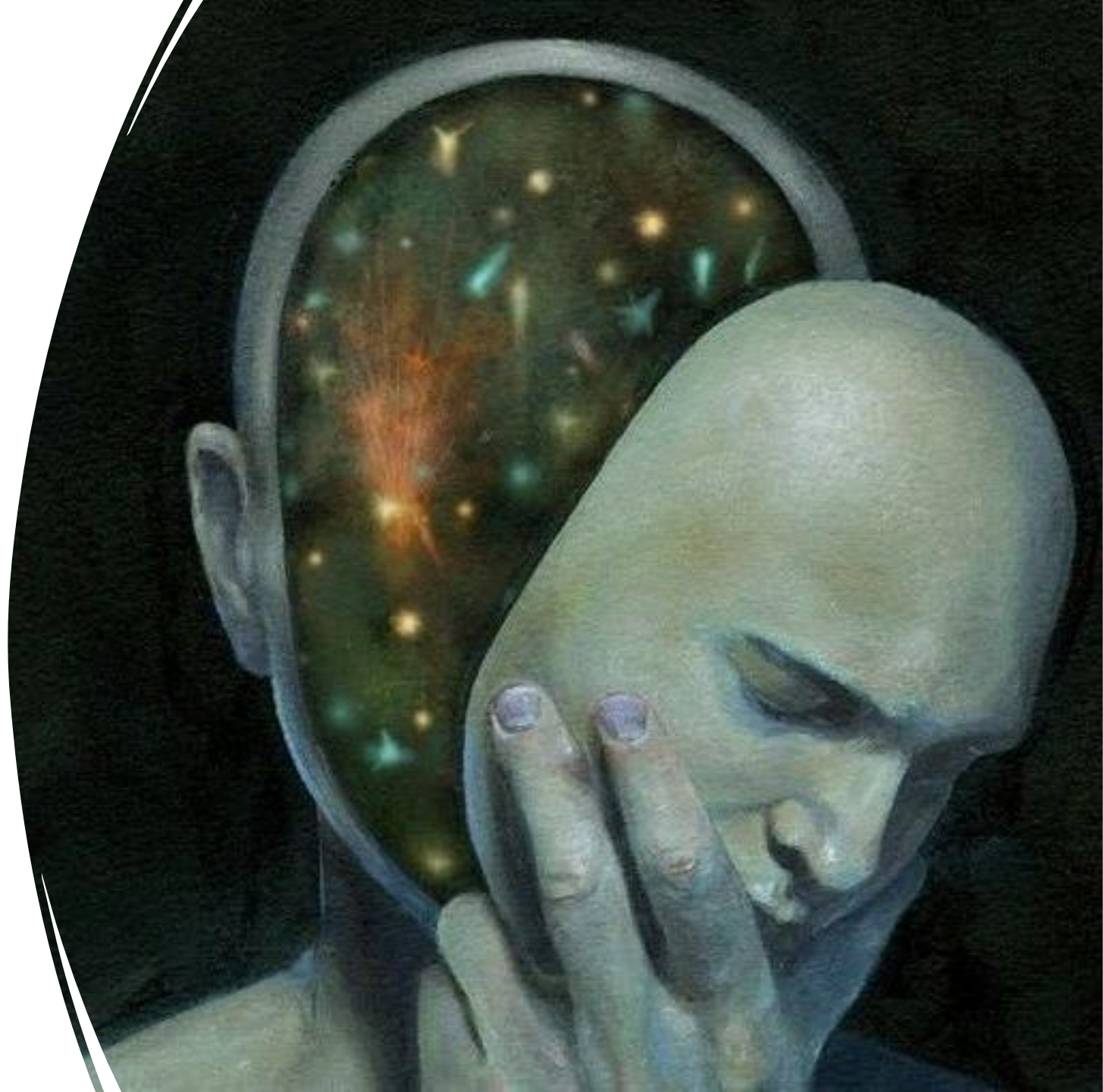
Scale of 1-5 how would you rate your current level of vulnerability at work? (1 = least vulnerable | 5 = most vulnerable)

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

# SOP #1: Align With True Self

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- Scale 1-5: How aligned with my highest Self? (5 highest)
- Specific areas where I am:
  - In alignment
  - Out of alignment
- How do I know?
  - What do I give with a full heart?
  - What causes regret?







# SOP #2: Understand Your Gifts

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- What are my greatest gifts to offer?
  - Technical
  - Non-technical
- Scale 1-5 (5 = highest): How fully are those gifts expressed?
  - If 4-5: How can I inspire others to do the same?
  - If 1-3: What's holding me back?

# SOP #3: Keep Healthy Boundaries

At their core, **boundaries are all about who we give power to**. They force us to analyze why we may not be giving ourselves permission to work and live in the way **that we feel is best** for our well-being.

**If we're not deciding our lives, schedules, and workloads, who is?** Boundaries allow us to decide when, how, and if we give this power away.

-Joe Sanok, HBR

- Encourage deeper relationships
- As leaders, others model our behavior
- Ask yourself
  - What effective boundaries are in place?
  - Which boundaries are missing or ignored?
  - What is it like for others to set boundaries with me?
- Scale 1:5: How effectively do I set and maintain boundaries?



# SOP #4: Prioritize Self-Care

- What self-care practices to I engage in?
- Scale 1-5: How much is self-care a priority?
- Why did I answer this way?
- “Fight or Flight” response by Sympathetic Nervous System
- Chronic stress = higher risk of just about everything...



Source:

- <https://hbr.org/2020/10/serious-leaders-need-self-care-too>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037>

# SOP #5: Confront What You're Avoiding

- What do we avoid?
  - Conversations
  - Decisions
  - Discomfort
- List: What am I avoiding?
- Decision and plan to confront each thing
- **Communicate to someone you trust**
- Scale 1-5: how effectively do I confront what I'm avoiding?



# Polling Question #4

What was my average vulnerability score?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

# Resources

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# Finding support

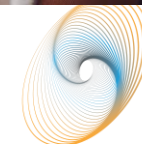
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- Books
- Trusted mentor
- Therapy / counseling
- Peer support / mastermind group
- Professional coaching
- Must be able to “turn off”



# Why Hire a Professional Coach?

- Leadership and life skills
- “Feel stuck” in career, life, etc.
- Support during transitional phases
- Space for life outside of work
- Time management
- Rediscovering agency
- Accountability partner



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# Questions and Answers

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# Thank you!



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