

How do I help someone... ... who is vulnerable?


Many experience vulnerability as it is a common problem and we all can be vulnerable to the pain of rejection, but for some this vulnerability is more than others. Due to vulnerability often being seen as shameful, it can be difficult to talk about, especially for those that are emotionally vulnerable, as it can be scary for them, due to opening up to others and sharing their personal thoughts, feelings and experiences that may be painful. Some individuals may carry a deep sensitivity to rejection and abandonment, and they cope by putting up an emotional “shield” to protect themselves, which may give the appearance of being strong and capable.

Signs of vulnerability in others

We need to try and be aware and look out for people who may be vulnerable. It may be difficult to spot vulnerability in others, as it is hard for some to share their thoughts and feelings. Many people that are vulnerable are reluctant to say if they are finding life difficult and need a helping hand. People who are vulnerable also may experience feelings of anxiety, fear, and apprehension due to the risk of them experiencing some type of harm.

Some signs of vulnerability can be, and are not limited to:

- Someone that does not open up easily, not trusting others, and they may hide a lot of their emotions.
- Someone that may apologise too much. E.g., when it is not their fault, or it is done to avoid any potential conflicts or arguments.
- A change in their behaviour or presentation.
- Someone that questions if people liked them.
- Someone that is not involved or on the fringe of social activities.
- Someone that comes in late and leaves early from meetings, or not attending regularly, so they don't interact with others.
- Someone that has loved ones who have control over them.



**Administer true justice;
show mercy and
compassion to one
another.**

ZECARIAH 7:9 NIV

How to help and care for someone who is vulnerable

Opening up about being vulnerable can be difficult because of the fear of being judged, hurt, and even abandoned. We need to be aware of ways we can help those who are vulnerable, understanding that they can be sensitive and may be hiding behind their shield that they feel safe behind.

Some ways to do this is:

- **Listen to one another** - We need to listen and get to know each other; we can listen for vulnerability in conversations we have with one another and get to know each other and look for the signs.
- **Be kind to one another** - Vulnerability can be hard to see, and you could be standing next to someone who is trying their best in life, so remember whatever we do, do it with kindness in our hearts, as kindness can make a BIG difference.
- **Don't judge one another** – We have no idea what their journey is about, we should respect their decisions, without judgement.
- **Encourage one another** - Encourage them to be involved in things, this gives them a sense of purpose and social connection. We need to remember that even small steps in the right direction is success and recovery, and we need to acknowledge each small step so we can encourage them.
- **Be patient with one another** – We need to not be too quick to rush in and try to fix what we see as an issue, we need to give them space to set boundaries or adapt to their comfort zone, being patient and showing them empathy and compassion.
- **Be respectful and acknowledge one another's feelings** – Let them know it's OK to feel fearful, overwhelmed, sad, anxious, or stressed, and not to be dismissive of their vulnerability.
- **Make time for one another** – Make time to check in with them and build a rapport with them to build trust. By giving them some of your time you are showing that you support them, and actions speak louder than words.
- **Offer practical support to one another**- If someone isn't ready to talk, think about what practical support you can provide. Whether it is making a cuppa, helping with childcare, or cooking a meal, or it could be a phone call or text, small gestures can be comforting. Giving someone your time is the greatest gift, as when you give them your time, you are giving them a portion of your life.

To make a difference in someone's life, we do not have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect, we just must care. Remember we don't have to understand or know all the answers to show kindness and be caring. Never underestimate the value of little things, like a kind word or sending a text or card can mean a lot. We need to use our voice for kindness, our ears for compassion, our hands for charity, our mind for truth, and our heart for love.

Scripture tells how we should care for one another:

- **Be kind to one another** – Zechariah 4:32
 - **Bring joy to one another by helping them out** – Hebrews 13:16 pleased”.
 - **Pray for one another** – James 5:16
 - **Love one another** – John 13:34
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- **Be generous with one another** – 2 Corinthians 9:7
- **Comfort one another** – 1 Thessalonians 4:18, and 5:11
- **Honour one another** – Romans 12:10
- **Be patient and forgive one another** – 1 Corinthians 12:13
- **Share one another's burdens** – Galatians 6:2

Scripture tells how God cares

When we are caring for the vulnerable, we need to remind them that God is with them, we can do this by reassuring them with scripture, and reminding them that God will strengthen and help them, and uphold them with His right hand, Isaiah 41:10. We can also remind them that God knows their suffering, whatever they are facing is not lost on God, and that God recognizes their feelings and is also concerned for them. As our God is a God full of compassion, and He is gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth, Psalm 86:15. The Bible also says about God's care:

- **God sees us** – We never walk alone; God is with us every step of our life. We are precious and honoured in his eyes, as in Isaiah 43:4 it says, "Since you are precious and honoured in my sight and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life".
- **God hears us** – Jonah records that he called for help and God listened to his cry, Jonah 2:2. When we endure suffering, it can be hard to feel that God is near us, but God is always listening.
- **God is with us** – In Psalm 23:4 it records "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me". God will be a refuge, for those that are oppressed, and a refuge in times of trouble or distress.
- **God is near to the broken-hearted** – In Psalm 34:18 it is recorded "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed." God is the God of all comfort: who comforts us in all our troubles.
- **God receives us when we're overwhelmed** – Matthew 11:28 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. We also sing the hymns with the words, I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and sad. I found in him a resting place, and He has made me glad, and another hymn we sing is, Lord, uphold me day by day, shed a light upon my way. Guide me through perplexing snares, care for me in all my cares.
- **We can choose to release our fears to God** - 1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you". We also sing the hymns with the words, "When doubts and fears arise, when storms o'erspread the skies, shine through the cloud and rain, through sorrow, toil, and pain, make Thou my pathway plain, teach me Thy way, and Look to your Maker, He's promised to help you, and waits for your call. Just tell Him your trouble, He is the Almighty, there's nothing too big, and there's nothing too small" (Hymn 165).

Conclusion

We need to remember that in Colossians 3:12, we are told to show kindness and mercy to our brethren and sisters, while being kind and tender hearted to one another, and non-judgemental, but accepting of each other. Zechariah 7:9.

Let's do the best we can to minimise the effects of vulnerability in our brothers and sisters as we travel together in this wilderness journey until our Lord returns, and we come to the promised land.

We long for that day when our Lord will return, and He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more pain, for the former things are passed away. Even so come Lord Jesus. Revelation 21:4-5

Kylee Mingham

On the Adelphicare website you will find more articles on Vulnerability –

Vulnerability – Openness, by Fiona Bosly

<https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/097-vulnerability-F.pdf>

Vulnerability – Closed. Trust in God, by Laurence Lopherd and Cathy Strachan -

<https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/095-vulnerability-LnC.pdf>

Vulnerability – God’s help, by Kylee Mingham - <https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/096-vulnerability-K.pdf>

