

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:09.6] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to The Alpha Male Coach podcast. The only podcast that teaches men the cognitive mastery and alpha mindset that it takes to become an influential and irresistible man of confidence. Here is your host, certified life coach and international man of mystery, Kevin Aillaud.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:31.2] KA: What's up my brothers, welcome back to the Alpha Male Coach podcast. I am your host Kevin Aillaud. Today we're going to talk about (it's kind of like a part 2), it's a second segment, because we're going to talk about vulnerability and intimacy and this is a part 2 from the social anxiety episode.

If you remember the social anxiety episode: what happens is when we feel social anxiety, when we feel anxiety because we fear what other people are thinking about us. We fearing that they are thinking about all the worst things we are thinking about ourselves, it blocks our ability to be vulnerable and it blocks our ability to create intimacy.

So it's kind of like a part 2, it's kind of like that second segment of what happens when you transcend social approach and performance anxiety, but before we get into this episode guys, guess what I'm going to ask you to do? You know what I'm going to ask you to do.

I'm going to ask you to pause the podcast and go onto iTunes and leave me a rating, leave me a review on iTunes. Now I've had a lot of you guys contact me and say "I'd love to leave you a rating, I'd love to leave you a review, but I don't listen to your podcast on iTunes. I listen to it on Spotify, or I listen to it on Stitcher, I listen to it on pod bean, or some kind of other platform."

And it's totally cool guys, I totally get it, it's no big deal. I love you being in the audience, I appreciate your emails, I appreciate that you're sending me emails telling me that you wish you could give me a rating and review but cannot because of the platform you are listening on. So I love it, I appreciate it, thank you very much and if you've already done this on iTunes, I thank you for that as well. If you haven't, just head over there and handle that.

[0:02:20.1] KA: So what we're doing with the Spartans, in the Academy what we're doing now is emotional work, and we're getting ready to go into March. March is next weekend, a week from Sunday, and we're getting to go into March where we're going to learn the skill of believing new things.

But check this out guys, the only way we can start to believe new things, is when we know what we believe, now. And that's kind of why I decided to do the podcast, do the episode on vulnerability because we can't change facts right? We can only change our beliefs so as long as we think our beliefs are facts, we'll always be powerless against them.

We have to know what it is we believe, we got to separate our beliefs from the circumstances, you know, from the facts, we know what we believe. The way we know what we believe, the way we can find it out is by the way we feel. Right? By the way we feel during the event.

The experience that we have during a neutral circumstance is going to be our indicator, is going to be our guide to what we are thinking, to what we believe. So in February we've been doing a lot of emotional awareness work to prepare for March (which is going to be learning how to believe new things.) That's what we're doing in the Academy, in the Spartan Academy in March.

[0:03:31.2] KA: And so... let's do a little more emotional work today and talk about vulnerability and intimacy... And it's emotional work guys because it's uncomfortable because vulnerability feels uncomfortable, we have that experience. But really, it's all thought work. It's always going to be cognitive work because it's always our thoughts that create our feelings. And vulnerability and intimacy are kind of

the same thing, or at least... well they're not the same thing but you can't have one without the other. They have a relationship.

And I want to share how I think about intimacy and vulnerability in the context of thought work, in the context of your alpha state, and the context of taking full responsibility of your own emotions in emotional ownership.

Even though these 2 concepts are interdependent, I don't think it's intuitively obvious how to reconcile them, how to integrate them so that they are seen as one, as a path to the other. And the other, being a gateway to the first. They go with each other, they cannot exist without each other. They're interdependent.

[0:04:41.2] KA: So let's start with Vulnerability. And the way we tend to think about, and talk about vulnerability, at least the way I hear it talked about in the media, music, movies, television, social media as well, at least the way I hear it being talked about is, the capacity to be hurt by someone else.

Emotionally hurt, we are vulnerable. When we are vulnerable, that's what we say. We use that to mean that we can be "injured emotionally". We usually talk about emotionally injured, but we can talk about physical vulnerability as well.

To be injured physically, like an injured or old animal, the elderly animals/injured animals, they are more vulnerable to predators. And we kind of say that we're vulnerable to someone else when we have that kind of exposed emotional vulnerability.

We're kind of injured in some way or we think that we have these soft spots, we find ourselves to be vulnerable by them. So we're risking the possibility that we're going to be found out, that we're going to be taken advantage of by this injury, by this weakness, by this soft part of us.

And not in the way that we like right? So when we talk about vulnerability, usually when we talk about it, what it means is risking hurt or pain. We mean hurt or pain caused by someone else. That's what we think vulnerability means, that someone else has the possibility, or making it possible for someone else to emotionally hurt us, sort of giving them that power.

[0:06:49.0] KA: Of course, you all know this is an illusion, this is the illusion created by the beta condition, you know it is impossible for anyone else to hurt us emotionally. Now I say it's impossible for someone to hurt us emotionally but of course we can abdicate our emotions to someone else and allow ourselves to be hurt by someone else based on the way we are thinking about their behavior, their actions. We're giving them that power.

But it's still us doing it to ourselves; it's still us creating the thoughts that are creating the emotions. It's always our thoughts that are creating our feelings; no one else can ever hurt us emotionally by definition of the way emotions are created, they're created by thoughts, and thoughts are our choices.

So by definition, no one can ever create an emotion inside of us, no one can ever hurt us emotionally. Other people's words and actions are neutral circumstances. Our brain has to interpret them to decide to think and feel what we think about them.

It is coming from us, it is coming from our brain, our choice. It's interesting to me, to consider what we mean when we say, "we feel vulnerable to someone" given that that is the universal truth is that no one can hurt us emotionally.

I think that when we say that we feel vulnerable, we do mean that we are scared of experiencing pain or rejection, but of course we are misidentifying the source of that pain and rejection. We're misidentifying it by placing it on that person, but truly the source of our own pain, the source of our rejection is always going to be our own thoughts.

And when you think about it, there are a lot of things you could share with someone else where you would not feel vulnerable at all, right? Even if they do reject you. So check this out, if you share something with someone that you're proud of, and you feel great about yourself, then you don't feel vulnerable.

So let's say you feel fine about how tall you are, you feel fine about your height. When you tell someone how tall you are, you wouldn't feel vulnerable about it. You'd feel fine about it, right? So you'd feel great about being 5'9" and someone freaks out and rejects you because they find out how tall you are, they find out 'oh my gosh you're 5'9"' they reject you.

But you don't feel any shame about that, you're not feeling vulnerable and you're not feeling rejected by that, you just think, "oh wow, ok well I'm glad that didn't work out. I'm glad they found out how tall I was early on before things really got serious because then it would have just happened later and it would be no big deal.

[0:08:55.2] KA: But whereas of course if you have negative thoughts about your height, then it feels really scary to admit to someone before you meet them. Because then it's like, 'oh my gosh they're going to find out, they're going to see how tall I am' and that's where that social anxiety comes from that creates that vulnerability, that lack of being vulnerable, that hiding and being scared.

Or let's say you're proud of where you went to school; let's say it's not something physical lets just say you're proud of where you went to college. You don't feel vulnerable when you tell people that, right? And if someone were to react with rejection and hostility, let's say you went to University of Michigan, and somebody else went to Ohio State.

So if somebody does react to you with hostility because of that rivalry there, you would feel bad about it, you'd just think that they're weird right? There's something wrong with them because they went to Ohio State right? That's just how that goes.

But it's not that they're feeling vulnerable about that because you are proud of where you went to school, of where you went to college. When we feel vulnerable I think it means that we are disclosing or sharing something with someone else about which we still feel anxiety, or shame, or distress or fear around. We don't feel vulnerable when we're talking about things that we feel good about, or even neutral about.

Our discomfort with vulnerability, the reason why vulnerability is scary, is really just a fear that someone is going to react that confirms what we already think about ourselves. I already think this about myself, and then I just think that you're going to agree with me. That's how thoughts always work!

We don't care about other people's negative opinions unless we fear that they are true, or we agree with them. So when we feel vulnerable sharing something with someone, I think it's because we are actually judging or shaming ourselves for the thing we are sharing. We've already pre-judged ourselves.

And then we're afraid of the other person as well, the other person is just going to agree with us (because we've already judged ourselves and how can this other person disagree? Because think it's a fact, we don't even know it's a belief. We just think it's a fact about the way we are, so how would this person think anything different?

[0:11:05.0] KA: We're afraid that they're going to confirm our worst fears about ourselves, and that's why it's scary. When we worry that sharing with someone will drive them away it's because we're already driving ourselves away brothers! That's the thing, it has nothing to do with the other person and it never does. We fear their rejection because we're really fearing our own rejection of ourselves. And this is the false sense of danger, when we outsource of our opinion of ourselves to someone else. Because if they react in a way that's kinder than you are to yourself (if they disagree with you), then sometimes you're able to adopt that perspective. Sometimes you're able to say, "ok you're right I'm going to borrow your thoughts, and I'm going to think those, and I'm, going to feel good. But if they react in a way that's similar to how you already think about yourself then it feels ten times worse because you take it as additional evidence to bolster your own negative self talk. Those are negative thoughts that you have that kind of

overrides the tentatively positive thoughts or accepting thoughts about yourself that you're trying to believe, that you're trying to have and create for yourself. So the truth is, the only person that we are emotionally vulnerable to as adults is ourselves. The only person you're truly emotionally vulnerable to is you! And you probably don't take that nearly with as much care (take as much care with your own thoughts about yourself) and your own vulnerability with yourself, as you want other people to. You want other people to treat you better than you're going to treat yourself. And I think that real vulnerability is sharing what's going on in our thoughts and feelings with someone else by sharing our internal life even though they don't cause our feelings. We can know that (that they don't cause our feelings), that they can't make our feelings better, and that they can't make our feelings any worse (we are in complete control of that.)

[0:13:02.1] KA: So it's actually about showing up to share with someone despite our own discomfort in doing so. We don't become vulnerable by giving other people the power to hurt us, right? We can be vulnerable in our intimate relationships by being willing to be vulnerable to ourselves. When we share innermost experience with someone else, we're not giving them an opportunity to hurt us. That's the most important thing: they cannot hurt us. We're not saying, 'here we are go ahead and hurt us', we are giving OURSELVES an opportunity to hurt us by the way we are going to be thinking about ourselves in that relationship.

None of us are perfect at managing our minds, none of us are in our alpha state 100% of the time. And in those heightened emotional states when we're really in the emotion (reacting to the emotion), we're particularly apt to momentarily losing our shit! And we stop managing our mind, that's it, we just stop. We're in that beta condition, the emotion has tackled us and it's kind of like we become the Incredible Hulk of emotion (whatever the emotion is.) If the emotion is rage, then we actual ARE the Incredible Hulk. But if the emotion is sadness, or fear, or whatever is, then that is now us. The Bruce Banner in us is gone, the emotion is in control. So it's like we're turning on the lights in a room that we would usually ignore, and we're inviting someone else in and saying, 'hey check this out, here's our worst fear.' And it's not our worst fear, it's not our worst fear of they're going to think of what we're showing them. It's not they're worst fear of what they're going to think about the room, it's what we're going to say to ourselves if we think we don't like the room, if we think they don't like room.

[0:14:56.1] KA: And that's why vulnerability is so uncomfortable, because it has nothing to do with what they actually say. It has nothing to do with what they actually think. Even when someone reassures that they're not rejecting you, or maybe they handle it a way that you thought you wanted them to: it still doesn't help. It still doesn't take away the vulnerability, it still doesn't take away that feeling of discomfort. It's the same as when someone apologizes and it doesn't take away that feeling of anger. So you've done something here, you reassured me of something, but I still feel this way. Expressions of acceptance and love don't change your experience of vulnerability as "uncomfortable". The only thing that's going to change your experience, your emotion, is... what? You can fill in the blank here right? It's your thoughts, right brother? Because unless you start thinking new thoughts, you're still going to keep having those feelings regardless of what the other person does. Because it's not what the other person is doing that's creating the vulnerability, that's creating the discomfort, that's creating the emotion: it's the way you're THINKING. So being willing to be uncomfortable in vulnerability, and be afraid of that experience, and show up to have it anyway (to be there with it), that's what true vulnerability is. And those of us that want to control other people's perception of us in order to feel safe, we don't like to show all the parts of ourselves. We hide from vulnerability, because we want to control the way people think about us. That's what people pleasing is! People pleasing is lying. People pleasing is not showing up as yourself, it's NOT being vulnerable. It's only showing people the certain parts of you, that you want to create for them, so that you're manipulating the way they think. Especially the parts we have shame or fear about: that's what we hide. We don't hide the best parts about ourselves. Vulnerability is being willing to show up and being willing to be seen by another person who we can't control. It's the knowledge that we cannot control them.

[0:17:02.0] KA: So, we can show up as ourselves. There's nothing to fear, there's nothing to fear from their thoughts: their thoughts are THEIRS. Being willing to risk the discomfort that may arise when we have our OWN thoughts and feelings about that experience, or process, that's where the discomfort is coming from. It's OUR thinking, it's not their thoughts, it's not what they do.

We have to be willing to sit with our own mind, with our own emotion. When we chose to share those parts, we chose to do through that discomfort, we chose to have those feelings. We're choosing that on purpose.

And true vulnerability is not giving someone else power to hurt us, but willing to show up and be uncomfortable being seen in our realness, in our human-ness. Which is an imperfectly managed mind, we are perfect in our alpha state, but our mind (that beta condition) who doesn't always think/feel or act the way we want to.

Sometimes we are in that state of beta condition. So in that sense brothers, vulnerability and authenticity are very closely connected. We can be vulnerable when we are willing to show up in the truth of ourselves, which isn't always our favorite parts about of ourselves. The truth isn't always what we love about ourselves.

Sometimes it's thoughts that we don't love about ourselves, but that doesn't mean that other people are going to have the same thoughts. It's just what WE think, which means it's not the truth anyway (it's equal part truth and lie, we're just choosing to believe it.)

It isn't always clean, it isn't always needed, it isn't always pretty. It's not always what we imagined what we wanted other people to see in us, and it's not always the image we want to cultivate and present in order to try to control their thoughts and feelings about us. Because vulnerability is about admitting everything!

[0:18:55.0] KA: All of the way we think about ourselves, all of these imperfections. But of course, perfection is not a real thing. Those are just the thoughts we have about ourselves! But as long we believe them, they are real to US.

And vulnerability is being willing to show up anyway, to show up when we believe these thoughts, and that's how we break them down. That's how we shatter the glass ceiling of limiting belief. But in order to do that we have to identify and observe compassion what these limiting beliefs are, and this requires vulnerability.

The other option is to hide from the emotion, which hides the cognition that causes it. You know it's almost like what we're doing when we chose to be vulnerable with someone, is we're choosing to subject ourselves to our own thoughts, to our own minds, to the pain that we will create for ourselves in order to share something with that other person.

We are willing to admit when we don't have it all together, to admit that we have negative emotions, that we have parts of ourselves that we fear or that we're ashamed of. And we're willing to show up as we really are, even though it means we can't control other people's thoughts and feelings.

And the truth is that we can never control their thoughts or their feelings, but we pretend that we can by showing them only certain parts of ourselves. Hiding parts and showing parts, and that people pleasing/manipulating.

We pretend that that helps us control what they think and feel about us, but it doesn't. And to be vulnerable means to show up as you truly are and acknowledging what was always true (which is that you don't control how other people are going to receive you.)

And to be vulnerable with yourself, to allow yourself to share your imperfections with someone else without making that an opportunity just to beat yourself up. When you are willing to do THAT brother, what we are willing to do is to share our thoughts with this person, even the thoughts we don't like. Even the thoughts we are resisting, even the thoughts we want to change.

[0:21:02.2] KA: And this leads us into the only way intimacy can arise, because intimacy is our name/word for love or affection that feel about someone when we believe that we know them, or we believe they know us. And that's of course a story, so it's sort of an emotional proximity or kind of knowledge or exposure.

It's not a word we use to describe meaningful music, or meaningful poetry, it's an intimate relationship we have with people. We might have an intimate relationship with we have with people's work, like a musician's work or a poet's writing because we're exposed to it we've developed this conversation in our brains with it (which is what a relationship is.)

But we're not intimate with them, we're intimate with people or sometimes things who know us in real life, or who we know, who we've spent time with, who have spent certain facts or feelings or thoughts about our lives with.

Now here's the thing, the standard theory is that intimacy is not possible without vulnerability because: in order to feel known, you have to give someone the power to hurt your feelings. And we already know this is not true, that intimacy and vulnerability go together because what makes us feel close to people, is letting them in in such a way that we are subject to them creating feelings for us; creating our feelings.

And you know that that illusion is when we are trapped in the beta condition. So you know the standard theory is erroneous, but I still think that intimacy is not possible without vulnerability, and I think it because intimacy comes from the process of sharing our thoughts or feelings or stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, with someone.

We share our thoughts and feelings with someone so that we can experience the willingness to show up as ourselves so that we can feel that discomfort. So we are never really in a relationship with someone else, we're only ever in a relationship with our THOUGHTS about someone else, and the relationship with someone else is the way in which we learn to deepen and mature our relationship with ourselves.

[0:23:10.0] KA: One of the things I see sometimes in my students, and in my own brain, is that we want to learn how to manage our minds and take responsibility for our feelings so that we can sometimes "get better outcomes in our relationships".

And that better outcomes is in quotes, what are these better outcomes? What is better? What is a better outcome? We secretly think that eventually, once we figured out, once we've cracked the code on how to have friendships or romantic relationships or handle our family the right way, then we can finally depend on them to take over being in charge of how we feel!

We want to get better at having friends and dating so that we can get friends or a partner, so then we can eventually feel safe and happy forever because we'll have attracted better people who will then cause all of our feelings for us positively. That's kind of the lie that the brain is telling us, that's why the brain is such a trickster. It really is the greatest joker on the planet. It's just always playing games, because that's not how it works. Nothing is forever, nothing is forever.

And people and lives are always changing, people make fast friends and then they fall out or move away, friendships fall apart. I've had so many friends in my life, really close friends that I really got along with and we hung out every day and now those people in my past, I don't see those people anymore. I have new friends, I have people I'll hang out with now and maybe in 5 years I will not see them.

Let's talk about romantic relationships (that's even more obvious), people fall in and people fall out of love all the time. Sometimes people fall in love and they don't fall out of love but then one of them gets hit by a bus... Eventually every relationship of every kind, has to end. Either one of you ends it, or one of you dies. Those are the only 2 endings. Those are the only 2 options I can see...

[0:25:00.1] KA: And I'm not trying to morbid here! But the point of vulnerability and intimacy aren't to get better at making connections so that you can finally get some kind of permanent feeling of safety and love for someone else right? That's not the point guys, because that'll never happen.

There is no kind of permanent feeling of safety. There is no guarantee of the future, that's the thing about the future. There's never going to be that point. There's never going to be that moment. The point of

vulnerability and intimacy is to learn how to be present in your relationship with yourself at a deeper level and how to share what you think is shameful about you and love yourself through that.

So that you can feel shameful about it, you can feel discomfort and still feel love for yourself. And you know what? If you're lucky, and you found an alpha partner, by which I mean a partner that can access their alpha state, then the person you're going to share it with is able to model that love for you.

They're going to be able to give you an example of what it means to hold a space for the parts of you that you aren't proud of, or that you want to reject (and they don't reject you and hold that space for you), and instead allow you to observe yourself with compassion.

It's actually why coaching is so helpful is because that's what a coach does, that's what I do with my students. A coach holds and shares space with you to give you an example of what it means to fully accept yourself by fully accepting you, and not judging you, and modeling how to bring curiosity and awareness instead of judgment and criticism.

That's what a good coach does. And sometimes, if you're lucky enough to have it happen, it'll happen in your personal relationships as well. But even if it doesn't happen, even if in your personal relationships, even if you're aren't lucky enough to have someone else show up for you in that way, you can do it for yourself, and you have to.

[0:26:54.0] KA: And that's what I teach my students, is for them to do it for themselves. Because the truth is, even if someone else does show up for you in that way, brother if you're not ready to show up for YOURSELF in that way, it doesn't matter.

Because you're going to drive them away, or you're just not going to see it. You're just going to be ghosted, you're just going to be looking through it, and it won't make a bit of difference to you. You have to be able to learn how to show up for yourself in that way because your relationship with yourself is the longest one and the most important one you will ever have.

So how can you be more vulnerable with yourself? And how can you accept and see other people's vulnerability with themselves? How can you make space for that, even when they think it has something it has something to do with you?

Even when they're reaching out blaming and criticizing you. Those are some powerful questions to think about. Those are some powerful questions for you, and one of the things I think happens is when are afraid to be truly vulnerable we seek false intimacy.

We want too much and we want it too quickly. We want expressions of affection and adoration that haven't really been earned, that haven't been created with that thought work. We want to fast forward to intimacy because we're not willing to be vulnerable and uncomfortable.

And I think a lot of us do that in our personal and our romantic relationships. So thinking about where you are in your life, you need to work on being vulnerable with yourself and how that would impact how you show up in your relationships.

THAT is such important work... So if you're in the Spartan Academy, I want you to put something in the slack group under the prompt that came out today so I prompted you guys today about this so go to the slack group and check this out.

But if you're not in the Spartan Academy yet, and it's something you struggle with, if vulnerability and showing up as your true self, as your authentic self and being intimate with people is something you're struggling with, then this is a great time to join because not only are you going to be doing the cognitive emotive work to improve yourself every day, that daily self study that we do as a meditative process, and you'll be executing action items to build failure resistance and achieve an impossible goal.

[0:29:14.0] KA: There's also a group of like-minded guys who are on the same journey. And that's the beauty of the Spartan Academy, because everyone is on that same journey learning the same skill. And on that online educational, inspirational, and entertaining community that we share and have together, we all have the opportunity to practice vulnerability and intimacy because the process of growth requires mistakes and thoughts around imperfection that we share with ourselves, and get coaching on.

It's not just me as a coach but it's all the members showing up, for each other in a way that allows for vulnerability and intimacy. It's almost interwoven and integrated into the program and into the process. Because it's done in a way that holds space for showing each other what it's like to accept each other with curiosity and love instead of judgment and criticism. And it's so powerful and it's so amazing and I love the Spartans, and I invite you to join the team.

And that's what I got for you today guys, check out the Elevated Alpha Society Spartan Academy for the development of cognitive mastery. You can find that on my website thealphamalecoach.com go there right now and in the menu and at the top, click 'work with Kevin' and check it out. Elevated Alpha Society Spartans. I look forward to chatting with you talking with you, working with you and until next week my friends, my brothers, elevate your alpha...

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:28:01.5] ANNOUNCER: Thank you for listening to this episode of the Alpha Male Coach Podcast. If you enjoyed what you've heard and want even more, sign up for *Unleash Your Alpha*, your guide to shifting to the alpha mindset, at thealphamalecoach.com/unleash.

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