VULNERABILITY IN ENGINEERING

(A STORY TOLD THROUGH A SERIES OF ALBERT EINSTEIN QUOTES, THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE TRUE)

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"I am afraid of that day when people will post quotes with my name which I never said"

-Albert Einstein"
Synopsis

- Being new engineer
- Being an older engineer, at a new company
- Fear of asking questions
- A mature team, welcoming a new engineer
- Learning new skills
- Unlearning old behaviors
- Re-learning new social behavior
- Navigating spaces where EVERYONE is a genius
- Creating safe spaces for people to ask questions
- Psychological Safety
- Inclusion

BEING HUMAN
What the heck is Vulnerability? Especially In Engineering

Vulnerability is the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.
Doing test driven development: I write a test and when I see it fail, I wonder why. I forgot that I did not write the implementation.

My biggest #codenewbie mistake as a junior was writing an update query (MySQL) without a where clause in some code and running it. On our orders database. The day invoicing was done.

Learned something about not developing against prod that day.

First job, first day, deleted the production database.

crashed a prod server trying to join 2 huge tables on a buggy clause that was basically 1=1. 100 billion row crossjoin, anyone?

deleted root after an elaborate install of OS plus database, because a misplaced space led to "rm -rf /xyz*" instead of /xyz* 😞😞☹️
How Do I Know? I’ve Lived It, No Fluff.

- Being able to communicate frustrations
- Understanding that everyone is going through something you know nothing about
- Being open is being vulnerable
- Being honest and vulnerable with yourself is more important
- Finding a safe space to be human
- Understanding my consciousness
- Understand everyone is living a different life, and has different responsibilities
First Things First, Vulnerability Is Beautiful

- Vulnerability is the core of shame and fear and our struggle for worthiness, but it appears that it's also the birthplace of joy, of creativity, of belonging, of love.
- Vulnerability creates stronger communities
- Vulnerability builds stronger mentors
- Vulnerability makes stronger leaders
- Vulnerability creates a better culture
Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

- Albert Einstein
Meet People Where They Are, Please.

- LISTEN (Understand, there is always something to be learned)
- Expand on what they’re good at (you should be giving more praise than criticism, anyone who is doing the opposite is doing it all wrong) The idea of 5.6 to 1 (Harvard Review).
- If it isn’t working on your team, work to find them another (Teams are all about fit, it’s hardly ever about skills….some of the best engineers can NOT work together….ask some of the DOJO coaches about that)
- For new team members, do your research (don’t assign someone a mentor until you get to know them and how they work)

“The most important lesson when it comes to developing leaders is to use what works. Experiment with different approaches, try different things out, and when it works, go with it. When it stops working, move on to something else. As people grow, their needs change. How we support their development should as well.”
Don’t Just Encourage People To Show Up As They Are, But Show Up Next TO Them

- Don’t expect assimilation, but respect differences....it builds better relationships
- Be aware, be cautious, be vulnerable
- Don’t be afraid to not understand differences (Ramen Noodles vs. RAMEN Noodles)
- Understand when something tragic is happening in different cultures, current events---how can you support?
- Go to events that support other genders, identities, and cultures—it is uncomfortable but that’s likely how they feel everyday
- Don’t be a savior, be an ally.
- It all starts with simple conversation
It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.

Albert Einstein
Everyone Has Something Different To Bring To The Table—Embrace THAT

- Understand that, everyone learns differently. Some people can solve 1 problem in 10 minutes that it takes someone else an hour to solve, and that’s okay.
- Encourage people to ask questions and don’t leave them to find the answer but pull up aside of them help them find it.
- Be willing to admit when you don’t know.
- Put them on projects where time holds no value, give them space to learn and grow without pressure.
- Give help to those who need it most

“No, its never a dumb question. It’s always a learning opportunity” – Nick Pabon, Sr. Engineer, NDII
We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

- Albert Einstein

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When There Is A Problem, Don’t Rely On The Same System That Made It, To Fix It

- No matter how many times you need to go back to the drawing board, GO BACK
- Not everyone is a fit, and that’s okay
- The definition of insanity is doing the same thing twice and expecting a different outcome
If you can’t explain it *simply*, you don’t understand it well enough.

— Albert Einstein
Maybe, its YOU

- If you feel like someone isn’t understanding what you’re saying, re-define your approach.....maybe it’s you...be vulnerable enough to admit that.
- What works for one person, won’t work for all persons.
- Be accountable

Well, well, well, if it isn't the consequences of my own actions
Hard Work Beats Talent, When Talent Fails To Work Hard

- In order for us all to learn and grow—We all need to feel what it’s like to be uncomfortable
- Have hard conversations—challenge the status quo
- Diversity in thought is extremely important, diverse teams are proven to perform better (it’s important that we all don’t think alike)

Remember, “It is easy to take a person willing to constantly learn and train them, than it is to take someone full of ego (already seemingly a genius) and help them unlearn all toxic behavior” – Unnamed Target Engineering Manager 😊
"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious."

- Albert Einstein
Mentorship Helps Everyone

- Knowing how to do something is one thing, teaching someone else how to do it is a completely different ball game—be hungry and stay curious to learn.
- Mentorship identifies blind spots for the leader and the mentee.
- Encourage your mentee that you don’t have to be a leader to lead.
- Be comfortable leading from the back, not always the front.
- Allow yourself to have more than one mentor.
- Always challenge the status quo.
Do you believe in miracles? Well, you should. In fact, life itself is a big miracle. There are so many things that are beyond our understanding. There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle; you can live as if everything is a miracle.

— Albert Einstein —
Everyone Doesn’t Have Access To The Same Opportunities, Utilize Yours

- 50 days of training
- AABC Lunches
- Dojo Offerings
- Conferences (Afrotech 😊)
- Social media self preservation
- Location
- Status
- Race
- Gender
- Sexuality
Blah Blah Blah, So What Am I Getting By Being Vulnerable And Open?

Diverse teams make better decisions up to 87% of the time.
I'll leave you with this. This is what I have found: To let ourselves be seen, deeply seen, vulnerably seen ... to love and teach with our whole hearts, even though there's no guarantee ---- to practice gratitude and joy in those moments of terror, when we're wondering, "Can I love you this much? Can I believe in this this passionately? Can I be this fierce about this?" just to be able to stop and, instead of catastrophizing what might happen, to say, "I'm just so grateful, because to feel this vulnerable means I'm alive." And the last, which I think is probably the most important, is to believe that we're enough. Because when we work from a place, I believe, that says, "I'm enough" ... then we stop screaming and start listening, we're kinder and gentler to the people around us, and we're kinder and gentler to ourselves.

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Message me on slack, I hate Skype!