Cisco AnyConnect VPN - Failed to initialize connection subsystem

Q: Cisco AnyConnect VPN - Failed to initialize connection subsystem

> ℹ️ This article refers to the Cisco AnyConnect VPN. If you're looking for information on the Prisma Access VPN Beta that uses the GobalConnect app, see: Prisma Access VPN Landing Page.
>
> If you're not sure which service you're using, see: [istcontrib:How do I know if I'm using the Cisco AnyConnect VPN or the Prisma Access VPN?]

You get an error message when trying connect to MIT's VPN using Cisco AnyConnect:

> ⚠️ *Failed to initialize connection subsystem.*

Answer

- The short answer is:

Set "vpnui.exe" to use Windows 8 compatibility mode, until Microsoft and Cisco decide who will fix the problem.

- The longer answer is:

Microsoft recently released a Critical Security Update (KB 3023607, included as part of KB 3034682). The update changes some details of the Windows SSL/TLS API, in a way that breaks Cisco AnyConnect. Uninstalling the update would fix Cisco AnyConnect but would leave your computer vulnerable.

A Cisco support forum post recommends setting Windows 8 compatibility mode on the Cisco apps like "vpnui.exe":
https://supportforums.cisco.com/discussion/12423591/latest-microsoft-feb-2015-patch-breaks-anyconnect-smc
You'll need to restart the VPN app (or the computer) after changing the compatibility settings.

As another approach, the Microsoft support page for KB 3023607 offers an "AppCompat" shim for the issue:
https://support.microsoft.com/kb/3023607