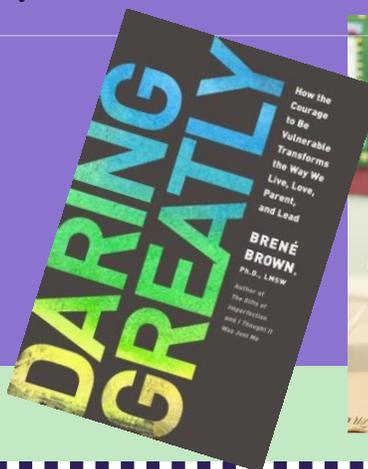


Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead.

Written by: Brené Brown

“*Perfect* and *Bulletproof* are seductive, but they don’t exist in the human experience. Rather than sitting on the sidelines and hurling judgment and advice, we must dare to show up and let ourselves be seen. This is vulnerability. This is *daring greatly*”.

- Brené Brown



Who is Brené Brown?

Brené Brown, Ph.D., LMSW is a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She has spent the past decade studying vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame.

Brené is a nationally renowned speaker and has won numerous teaching awards, including the College’s Outstanding Faculty Award. Her groundbreaking work has been featured on PBS, NPR, CNN, The Katie Show, and Oprah Winfrey’s Super Soul Sunday.

Her 2010 TEDx Houston talk on the power of vulnerability is one of the most watched talks on TED.com, with over 12 million views. She gave the closing talk, Listening to Shame, at the 2012 TED Conference in Long Beach.

Brené is the author of the #1 *New York Times* Bestseller *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (2012). She is also the author of the *New York Times* Bestseller *The Gifts of Imperfection* (2010), and *I Thought It Was Just Me* (2007).

Brené is also the founder and Chief Learning and Research Officer of The Daring Way – a training and certification program for helping professionals who want to facilitate her work on vulnerability, courage, shame, and worthiness.

For more information visit her website at:
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By: Kristin Smysniuk



Introduction

Daring Greatly is a profound read for leaders of all kinds. Whether you are a parent, an educator or a CEO, you are in a position of leadership and as such have the ability to be the catalyst for great change. In order to live our best lives, be the best we can be and impact those around us in a positive manner, we must be willing to be vulnerable. Vulnerability, in the case of *Daring Greatly*, is the key to unlocking a transformative change – not only to the way we live but to the way we parent and lead. It is in vulnerability that we look into the deepest part of ourselves, discover what about the way we live is standing in our way, and make transformative change in order to begin living the life we not only desire but deserve.

Daring Greatly works to find answers to the following questions:



1. What drives our fear of being vulnerable?
2. How are we protecting ourselves from vulnerability?
3. What price are we paying when we shut down and disengage?
4. How do we own and engage with vulnerability so we can start transforming the way live, love, parent, and lead?

Chapter 1: Scarcity

Looking Inside Our Culture of “Never Enough”

What is Scarcity?

Scarcity is the overwhelming feeling of “never enough”. It is a place where everyone is overwhelmingly aware of his or her shortcomings and areas where they are lacking. It is a space where we live in comparison and competition with others. We spend time calculating what we have and don’t have and what we still need to acquire. One thing that makes scarcity so devastating and self-defeating is that we are often comparing our lives to fictional accounts of what we believe other’s lives are like.



What is the Opposite of Scarcity? What Are We Aiming For?

The opposite of scarcity is not about abundance or attaining more than you could ever imagine. Rather the opposite of scarcity is *enough*. In a society where we are overwhelmed with feeling not **good** enough, not **worthy** enough, not **skinny** enough, not **rich** enough and not **smart** enough – we want to reach a place where we believe, because we know it to be true, that we are enough. That exactly as we are, we have something to offer the world. Vulnerability is the key to getting there.

Chapter 2: Debunking the Vulnerability Myths

In order to live vulnerably, which is to say that we are living in culture of “enough” rather than “scarcity”, it is necessary to unmask the myths that stand in the way of being vulnerable.

Four Myths of Vulnerability:

1. Vulnerability is Weakness

The argument is often made that vulnerability equates to being weak. With weakness often being viewed as unfavorable, it is avoided at all cost. However, at its core, vulnerability is the act of feeling. Everyone feels. It’s part of living. So, to say that vulnerability is weakness is to say that feeling is weakness. This is a dangerous path to go down. In order to live the lives we desire we must not shy away from feeling for feeling means we are alive.

2. I Don’t Do Vulnerability

Often linked to profession or gender, it is here that the practice of being vulnerable is dismissed. Dismissing vulnerability is to avoid it. When vulnerability is avoided it is often done so through engaging in behaviors that are not representations of our authentic selves – the person we want to be. Vulnerability is life and it cannot be opted out of.

3. Vulnerability is Letting it All Hang Out

This myth is centered on the belief that vulnerability means sharing our personal struggles, trials and tribulations with every person we encounter. That it requires an uncomfortable level of transparency. This is not the case. Instead, being vulnerable is to share our stories with those who have earned the right to hear about them. It is rooted in relationships of trust.

4. We Can Go It Alone

Going it alone is held in very high regard within our society. Pride is taken in the ability to be able to fend for oneself, take care of all issues at hand and anticipate what is ahead with no outside assistance. However, vulnerability is not the place to ‘go it alone’. Support is needed in order to practice vulnerability.

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose and deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path.” (34)



Chapter 3: Understanding and Combating Shame

Shame is...

1. The fear of disconnection.
2. The intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.
3. Shame is something we all experience.
4. Shame is a real pain and despite what people think emotions can hurt.

Three things you need to know about shame:

- We all have it.
- We're all afraid to talk about shame.
- The less we talk about shame, the more control it has over our lives.

Shame Tapes. AKA "The Gremlins"

Shame tapes are the dialogues that we have with ourselves. They are the repetitive internal messages that play over and over again telling us that we are not enough, we are not worthy and we are not capable. When beginning to feel vulnerable our GREMLIN'S act up and begin to tell us all the things that we ARE NOT.

Ninja Warrior Training: Combating Shame

In order to combat the Gremlin's we need to train ourselves to combat shame. The best way to do this? Develop and practice Shame Resilience.



Chapter 3: Continued...

“Shame resilience is the key to embracing our vulnerability. We can’t let ourselves be seen if we’re terrified by what people might think.” (61)



What is Shame Resilience?

Shame resilience is the ability to practice authentically when we experience shame, to move through the experience without sacrificing our values, and to come out the other side of the shame experience with more courage, compassion, and connection than we had going into it. (74)

Four Elements of Shame Resilience

1) Recognizing Shame and Understanding It’s Triggers

It is important to know when you are in the midst of shame. You have to take the time to feel it, work your way through it and figure out what triggered it. If you can develop a strong sense of what triggers your shame, you will be able to better avoid circumstances/situations where it exists.

2) Practicing Critical Awareness

It is important to look at shame critically in order to help put it in perspective. Is your shame: Realistic? Attainable? Based on what you need in comparison to what you think others need/expect from you? Practicing shame resilience means acknowledging shame for what it is.



3) Reaching Out

Here you need to own and share your shame story. Empathy cannot be experienced if you are not connecting with others.

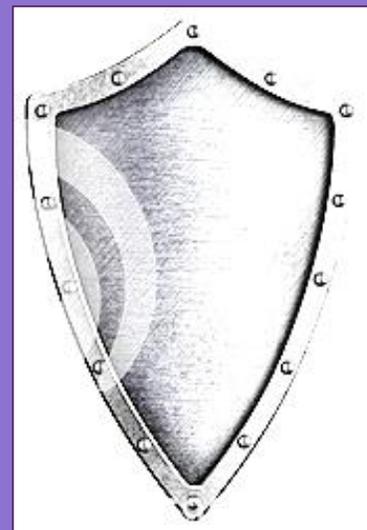
4) Speaking Shame

Say it out loud. Do not hide in your shame and allow it to take hold. It is necessary to talk about how you are feeling and ask for what you need in order to combat the shame you are experiencing.

“A sense of worthiness inspires us to be vulnerable, share openly, and preserve. Shame keeps us small, resentful, and afraid.” (64)

Chapter 4

The Vulnerability Armory



Vulnerability is scary. For this reason, people spend most of their time shielding themselves from it. They dip into their collection of “vulnerability arsenal” and pull out one of the three most common forms of vulnerability shields:
Foreboding Joy, Perfectionism and Numbing.

VULNERABILITY SHEILDS

Shield #1: Foreboding Joy

Here we see a fear of experiencing joy. Living in a world of scarcity leads us to make a connection between joy and vulnerability. By allowing ourselves to experience any form of joy, we are making ourselves vulnerable. So when we feel vulnerable in joy-filled situations we begin to dread joy’s counterpart – pain. So, to lessen the dread of what we view as an impending disaster, we are cautious about allowing ourselves to experience joy at all. If we spend our time preparing for the worst, we believe we will never be disappointed.

Shield #2: Perfectionism

Here we see the existence of the belief that if we can do everything perfectly, we will never experience shame. There is vulnerability in feeling imperfect. It comes back to the worry and wonder of what others think.

Shield #3: Numbing

Numbing is the embracing of whatever tactic works to lessen the pain we experience around discomfort and pain. However, it is ever more detrimental because it doesn’t just work to deaden the painful and difficult situations; numbing vulnerability works to dull the positive experiences as well. If we are numbing vulnerability – or what we see as the experience of or chance at pain and discomfort – we are, along the way, numbing joy, belonging, creativity and love.

COMBATING VULNERABILITY SHEILDS

However, there are ways to combat these shields ... we get there by Daring Greatly.

Daring Greatly to Combat Perfectionism: Practicing Gratitude

Gratitude is an antidote for Foreboding Joy. When you take time to be grateful for what you have, you cannot focus on all the things you don’t have or worry about the impending doom of what could be. Gratitude leads to feelings of joy as it is the way that we engage in a practice of “enough”.

Daring Greatly to Combat Perfectionism: Appreciating the Beauty of the Cracks

In order to move away from perfectionism there must be a change in thought process from “what will people think?” to “I am enough”. Living in a culture of ‘enough’ means embracing all the things about yourself – even the imperfections.

Daring Greatly to Combat Numbing: Setting Boundaries, Finding True Comfort and Cultivating Spirit

In order to combat numbing, one must learn how to actually feel their feelings. They need to stay aware of the numbing behaviors that they engage in and they need to learn how to lean into the discomfort of vulnerability and hard emotions that come along with it rather than find security of the comfort of their shields.

Chapter 5

Minding the Gap: Cultivating Change and Closing the Disengagement Divide

Why do we disengage?

We disengage as a way of protecting ourselves. When we feel that we are getting into a space that is too vulnerable, or a space that is full of shame, we disengage. Disengagement is also seen when we believe that the people who are leading us (bosses, teachers, religious leaders, parents or politicians) are not living up to their end of the bargain. Without strong leadership disengagement arrives.



What is the Disengagement Divide?

The disengagement divide is **the gap** that is present between our “*practiced values*” and our “*aspirational values*”.

Practiced Values: The things that we ACTUALLY think, do and feel.

Aspirational Values: The things that we WANT TO think, do and feel.

“Minding the Gap reminds us to pay attention to the space between where we’re standing and where we want to go.” (173)

Chapter 6

Disruptive Engagement: Daring to Dehumanize Education and Work

ABSENCE OF CREATIVITY
ABSENCE OF INNOVATION
ABSENCE OF LEARNING

=

DISENGAGEMENT

REIGNITING CREATIVITY
REIGNITING INNOVATION
REIGNITING LEARNING

=

DISRUPTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Disruptive Engagement is working to reignite creativity, innovation, and learning. How do we do this? **We Rehumanize Education and Work!** It is not an easy task. It requires strong and courageous leaders who are willing to put people back in the center of the equation. It is about being willing to have open and honest conversations about vulnerability and shame.

Ways to Rehumanize Education and Work:

1. Combat Shame

- *“Shame can only rise so far in any system before people disengage to protect themselves. When we’re disengaged, we don’t show up, we don’t contribute, and we stop caring.” (192)*

2. Eliminate Blame

- *“Blame is simply the discharging of pain and discomfort. We blame when we’re uncomfortable and experience pain – when we’re vulnerable, angry, hurt, in shame, or grieving.” (195)*

3. Engage in Feedback

- *“Without feedback there can be no transformative change. When we don’t talk to the people we’re leading about their strengths and their opportunities for growth, they begin to question their contributions and our commitment. Disengagement follows.” (197)*

Chapter 7

Wholehearted Parenting: Daring to be the Adults we want our children to be.

Who we are and how we engage with the world are much stronger predictors of how our children will do than what we know about parenting. In terms of teaching our children to dare greatly in the “never enough” culture, the question isn’t so much “Are you parenting the right way?” as it is: “Are you the adult you want your child to grow up to be?” (215)

The Wholehearted Parenting manifesto

Above all else, I want you to know that *you are loved and lovable*. You will learn this from my words and actions – the lessons on love are in how I treat you and how I treat myself.

I want you to engage with the world from a place of worthiness. You will learn that *you are worthy of love, belonging, and joy* every time you see me practice self-compassion and embrace my own imperfections.

We will practice *courage* in our family by showing up, letting ourselves be seen, and honoring vulnerability. We will share our stories of struggle and strength. There will always be room in our home for both.

We will teach you compassion by practicing *compassion* with ourselves first; then with each other. We will set and respect *boundaries*; we will honor hard work, hope, and perseverance. *Rest and play* will be family values, as well as family practices.

You will learn *accountability and respect* by watching me make mistakes and make amends, and by watching how I ask for what I need and talk about how I feel.

I want you to know *joy*, so together we will practice *gratitude*.

I want you to feel joy, so together *we will learn how to be vulnerable*.

When uncertainty and scarcity visit, you will be able to draw from the *spirit* that is a part of our everyday life.

Together we will cry and face fear and grief. I will want to take away your pain, but instead I will sit with you and *teach you how to feel it*.

We will *laugh and sing and dance and create*. We will always have permission to be ourselves with each other. No matter what, *you will always belong here*.

As you begin your Wholehearted journey, the greatest gift that I can give to you is to *live and love with my whole heart* and to *dare greatly*.

I will not teach or love or show you anything perfectly, but I will let you see me, and I will always hold sacred the gift of seeing you. *Truly, deeply seeing you*.

- from *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown -

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“DARING GREATLY IS NOT ABOUT WINNING OR LOSING. IT’S ABOUT COURAGE. IN A WORLD WHERE SCARCITY AND SHAME DOMINATE AND FEELING AFRAID HAS BECOME SECOND NATURE, VULNERABILITY IS SUBVERSIVE. IT’S EVEN A LITTLE DANGEROUS AT TIMES. AND, WITHOUT QUESTION, PUTTING OURSELVES OUT THERE MEANS THERE’S A FAR GREATER RISK OF FEELING HURT. BUT AS I LOOK BACK ON MY OWN LIFE AND WHAT DARING GREATLY HAS MEANT TO ME, I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT NOTHING IS AS UNCOMFORTABLE, DANGEROUS AND HURTFUL AS BELIEVING THAT I’M STANDING ON THE OUTSIDE OF MY LIFE LOOKING IN AND WONDERING WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF I HAD THE COURAGE TO SHOW UP AND LET MYSELF BE SEEN.”

~BRENE BROWN



Critical Evaluation

Daring Greatly is a transformative read. There really is no other way to put it. Your view of yourself, of your profession and of your family will come out dramatically changed though the reading of this book. Brené Brown pushes her readers to look inside of themselves and see honestly, likely for the first time, the challenging topics that show up in their daily lives. The exploration of self, the practice of leaning further inward, and the understanding that powerful things await us on the other side is one of the great positives of this book. This book is a journey. It could be read and re-read in order to gain further insights and move your journey along one step at a time. While the topics/concepts addressed are ones that challenge the status quo of our interactions with not only ourselves but also those around us, it is presented in a way that makes it feel achievable. Brown writes as though she is having a personal conversation with you. She is honest about her own shortcomings, shares powerful and at times challenging learning experiences with her readers and helps you to see that she is, at the end of the day, on the same journey as us. She is relatable and honest and her integrity shines through in each chapter of *Daring Greatly*. I would recommend anyone and everyone BUY this book. Don't borrow it from the library to read on the weekend. Trust me, you'll want your own copy. You'll be making notes in the margins!



A Little Time to Think...

1. What does vulnerability look like to you?
Vulnerability is _____.
2. What are some things you would do if you were not afraid to be seen?
3. It is important to have “real” people in the ring with you – people who have earned the right to hear your story. Who are your people?
4. Brené Brown says “you’re only as sick as your secrets”. What secrets are you keeping because you feel vulnerable?
5. What are some ways you could work the practice of gratitude into your life? Personally? Professionally?