

Becoming a Wholehearted Christian

**the difference between religion/faith*

The Gifts of Imperfection – Brené Brown

Let go of who you think you are supposed to be and to embrace who you are

Wholehearted Living is not something we accomplish, acquire or arrive at

- It's life work – soul work, a process
- Requires daily practice of courage, compassion and connection

Courage, Compassion and Connection: The Primary Concepts of Wholeheartedness

Courage

Originally courage was defined as “To speak one’s mind by telling all one’s heart”

**not heroics*

Ordinary courage

- Is speaking honestly and openly about who we are, what we are feeling and about our experiences
- Is putting our vulnerability on the line
- Happens daily
 - Reaching out for help
 - Saying I am confused/I don't know
 - Willingness to be vulnerable and disappointed – sharing your dreams with the risk you will be disappointed

**Being late for church, or child disturbing*

Courage has a ripple affect

Compassion

Means to suffer with – it takes courage to be compassionate

What compassion is not

- A relationship between healer and the wounded
- Looking for someone or something to blame
- Being judgmental
- Fixing it

**Each of these responses are a form of self-protection*

What compassion is

- Relationship between equals
- Compassion can be real when we recognize our shared humanity
 - *Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others*
- Acceptance of ourselves and others

Boundaries and Compassion

- We have a fear of setting boundaries and making people accountable ***we would rather blame**
- Making people accountable is more work than blaming ***Todd and Brie**
- We are more compassionate and feel less judgment, resentment and anger when we set appropriate boundaries for ourselves and others ***plus hold them responsible**
- Making people accountable only works if you separate people from their behavior

Connection

Energy that exists between people when they feel heard, seen and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

Connection is in our biology – we need it to thrive emotionally, physically and intellectually

***calling from God – example of Jesus**

Struggles with current society and connection:

- Mistaking technology with connection
- Self- sufficiency - success equated with not needing anyone
- If you can't receive you can't really give
- If you attach your self worth to helping but never need help you are not connecting or truly compassionate

Love and Belonging is a need for everyone but

- We can only love others as much as we love our authentic selves
- We can't truly belong if we don't practice self-acceptance
- Incongruent living is exhausting – accepting and loving ourselves is not only a priority but it is an ultimate act of courage

Wholehearted Guideposts

***Guideposts all connect and relate to each other – guideposts help provide courage, compassion, connection**

#1 Cultivating Authenticity: *Letting Go of What People Think*

#2 Cultivating Self-Compassion: *Letting Go of Perfectionism*

#3 Cultivating a Resilient Spirit: *Letting Go of Numbing and Powerlessness*

#4 Cultivating Gratitude and Joy: *Letting Go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark*

#5 Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith: *Letting Go of the Need for Certainty*

#6 Cultivating Creativity: *Letting Go of Comparison*

#7 Cultivating Play and Rest: *Letting Go of Exhaustion as a Status Symbol and Productivity as Self-Worth*

#8 Cultivating Calm and Stillness: *Letting Go of Anxiety as a Lifestyle*

#9 Cultivating Meaningful Work: *Letting Go of Self-Doubt and “Supposed To”*

#10 Cultivating Laughter, Song, and Dance: *Letting Go of Being Cool and “Always in Control”*

Guidepost #1 Cultivating Authenticity ..Letting go of what people think

We think people are either authentic, grounded, warm, down-to-earth, honest or not but authenticity is a daily practice of being who God created us to be.

Authenticity

- Cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable
 - Exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all made of strength and struggle
 - Nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen when we believe that we are enough
- *created in God’s Image – love us no matter what*

Struggle to be authentic:

- Don’t make people feel uncomfortable but be honest
- Don’t upset anyone or hurt anyone’s feelings but say what’s on your mind
- Sound informed and educated but not like a know-it- all
- Don’t say anything unpopular or controversial but have the courage to disagree with the crowd
- Can affect others around us when we practice authenticity – what if people like the perfect me better? The one who takes care of everything and everyone

Courage is telling our story but not being immune to criticism

**need to let go of what people think but still care*

**Have to be vulnerable to experience connection*

#2 Cultivating Self-Compassion – letting go of perfectionism

Perfectionism is not the same as striving to be your best or self-improvement **self-focused*

Perfectionism is that if we look, act and live perfect we can avoid blame judgement and shame

Perfectionism is about trying to earn approval and acceptance,

- I am what I accomplish and how well I accomplish it
- Please –Perform- Perfect

**other focused*

Perfectionism is on a continuum

- We are all perfectionists in different situations
- When feeling vulnerable
- Can become chronic and compulsive

***Doesn't happen in a vacuum – touches everyone around us**

Over coming Perfectionism

Exploring our fears

Acknowledging our imperfections without shame

Changing negative self- talk

Self- Compassion has three components

Self-kindness – warm and understanding toward ourselves when we fail, or feel inadequate rather than ignoring our pain or using self- criticism

Common humanity – feelings of inadequacy are part of shared human experience

***doesn't just happen to me**

Mindfulness – balanced approach to negative feelings

***not ignoring but not swept away by negativity**

Self –Compassion Scale – Dr. Neff www.self-compassion.org

#3 Cultivating a Resilient Spirit – Letting Go of Numbing and Powerlessness

Most Common Factors of Resilient people:

- Resourceful and have good problem-solving skills
- More likely to seek help
- Believe that they can do something that will help them to manage their feelings and to cope
- Have social support available to them
- They are connected with others (family friends)

Spirituality is a major component of resilience

Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion.

Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning and purpose to our lives

Out of our faith three concepts emerged that are essential to resilience

- Cultivating hope
- Practicing critical awareness
 - When we allow ourselves to become culturally conditioned to believe that we are not enough or don't have enough it damages our soul.
 - Practicing critical thinking and reality-checking is about spirituality.
- ***Faith is countercultural – God asks us to be not of this world**
- Letting go of numbing and taking the edge off vulnerability, discomfort and pain

Hope and Powerlessness

Hope is not an emotion it is a learned, chosen way of thinking that involve:

- Having the ability to set realistic goals
- Being able to figure out how to achieve those goals including the ability to stay flexible and develop alternative routes
- belief in ourselves

Cultivating hope is not fun, fast, and easy

but cultivating hope can be fun, fast, and easy

Hopelessness leads to powerlessness

- Powerlessness is dangerous and desperate
*we need to feel like we can affect change

Numbing and Taking the Edge Off

Dealing with difficult emotions fear, shame, grief, disappointment sadness causes vulnerability, discomfort and pain.

- Most of us engage in behaviors that help to numb and take the edge off vulnerability, pain and discomfort
 - Alcohol, drugs, food, sex, relationships, money, work, caretaking, gambling, staying busy, affairs, chaos, shopping, planning, perfectionism, incessant gossiping, exercise, constant change, Internet.....
- Wholehearted were not immune to numbing but aware of the dangers and developed the ability to feel their way through high vulnerability experiences
- Addiction can be described as chronically and compulsively numbing and taking the edge off of feelings
*Does our numbing get in the way of our authenticity, honesty, boundaries, worthiness, connection? Is it an escape from reality?
- We cannot selectively numb emotions. When we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions.

Spirituality/Faith is necessary for resilience

*How do you connect with God?.....community, nature, music, Word

Spirituality is connection

#4 Cultivating Gratitude and Joy – letting go of scarcity and fear

- Happiness is an emotion connected to circumstance – it can be created. Experiencing happiness is desirable but living from a place of gratitude and joy is life-giving.
- Joy happens when gratitude is practiced
- Joy/Gratitude are Spiritual/Faith practices

Joy is a spiritual way of engaging with the world that's connected to practicing gratitude

- **Joy is only found in God** and comes with virtue and wisdom
- Having an attitude of gratitude doesn't always translate to behavior – gratitude without practice isn't alive

- Neither joy or happiness is constant
- Joy comes in ordinary moments

Fear

The opposite of joy is fear not sadness – sometimes we miss joy because of our fears

- I am not going to feel this joy because it won't last
- Acknowledging how grateful/joyful I am is an invitation for disaster
- Intense feeling of love will often bring up the fear of loss

Scarcity

- Scarcity can be of safety, certainty, money, time, power, productivity
- We are living in a “not enough” society
- Translated into we are not enough – not thin enough, successful enough, valued enough, busy enough, educated enough, rich enough.....
- Once we let go of scarcity we discover the truth of sufficiency
- Sufficiency is an intentional choosing of the way we think about our circumstances.

We are a nation hungry for more joy because we are starving from a lack of gratitude.

***If we are not practicing gratitude and allowing ourselves to know joy we are missing out on the two things that will actually sustain us during the hard times**

#5 Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith – Letting go of the need for certainty

Intuition

Intuition is not a single way of knowing – it's our ability to hold space for uncertainty and our willingness to trust the many ways we've developed knowledge, insight, instinct, experience, faith and reason

- Intuition is not independent of reasoning – it uses memories, knowledge and experiences to give us a “gut” feeling
- Sometimes intuition tells you to follow your instincts or to check things out/get more information
- What silences intuition is our need for certainty
 - We look for assurances from others because we don't trust our own knowing, we are feeling vulnerable
 - We ignore our intuition to gather more information because it is too stressful, can't stand not knowing

Faith

Faith is a place of mystery, where we find the courage to believe in what we cannot see and the strength to let go of our fear of uncertainty

- Many forms of fundamentalism and extremism are about choosing certainty over faith – insisting on answers that are always true
- When God is used to explain tragedy – “There's a reason for everything” – is actually substituting certainty for faith

“The opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty” Anne Lamott

Faith is essential if we decide to be Wholehearted

#6 Cultivating Creativity – Letting Go of Comparison

Wholehearted people create

Comparison doesn't cultivate self-acceptance, authenticity or creativity

The only unique contribution that we will ever make in this world is born of our creativity

Creativity (expression of our originality) helps us stay mindful that what we bring to the world is completely original and can't be compared

#7 Cultivating Play and Rest – Letting go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth

Read 99 – 100

Play is as essential to our health and well-being as rest

Play is purposeless – play for the sake of play, it's fun

We see play, sleep and rest as a waste of precious time, not productive, because our self-worth is tied to our level of productivity

The opposite of play is not work it is depression

Taking the time to rest, sleep and play is countercultural

***we are a nation of exhausted overstressed adults and over scheduled children**

#8 Cultivating Calm and Stillness – Letting go of anxiety as a lifestyle

Whole hearted people are not anxiety-free but they are anxiety- aware. ***Anxiety was not a life-style. They practiced Calm and Stillness.**

Calm

Calm is creating perspective and mindfulness while managing emotional reactivity.

Practicing Calm

- Identifying when you are emotionally charged
- Breathing
- Counting
- Saying I need to think about this.

Calm is contagious

- **Do we want to heal ourselves and the people around us with calm**

Stillness

Stillness is not about focusing on nothingness; it's about creating a clearing. It's opening up an emotionally clutter-free space and allowing ourselves to feel and think and dream and question.

Fear is a barrier to stillness – we keep busy so we don't have to deal with reality

Meditation, prayer, alone time, reflection, exercise, less caffeine, walking

#9 Cultivating Meaningful Work – Letting Go of Self-Doubt and “Supposed To”

Wholehearted living includes meaningful work, a calling, having meaning in our lives

- We all have gifts and talents
 - When we share our gifts with the world we create a sense of purpose
- Squandering our gifts brings distress into our lives
 - We feel disconnected, empty, frustrated disappointment, fear, grief

Sharing our gifts and talents with the world is the most powerful source of connection with God

Using our gifts and talents to create meaningful work takes commitment

May not pay bills

Like our Gifts and Talents, meaning is unique to each one of us

No one can define what's meaningful for us

Barriers to Meaningful work

Self-doubt – letting our fear undermine our faith

Supposed – to.....

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive”

Howard Thurman

#10 Cultivating Laughter, Song, and Dance – Letting Go of Being Cool and “always in Control”

Laughter, song, dance used to express ourselves, communicate our stories and emotions, to celebrate and mourn, and to nurture community.

Laughter, song, and dance create emotional and spiritual connection; they remind us of the one thing that truly matters when we are searching for comfort, celebration, inspiration, or healing; We are not alone

Being Cool and in control is really hustling for our worthiness – can make you afraid to try new things

When we value being cool over having the freedom to be passionate, goofy, heartfelt, and soulful we betray ourselves – we will then do the same to others

DIG Deep – not pushing through, ignoring

- Deliberate in thought and behavior
- Inspired to make new and different choices
- Going – take action