



# The Gifts of Imperfection

## Brené Brown

- ▶ Let Go of who you think you are supposed to be and 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

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# **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”*

- ▶ 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
- ▶ 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

## ▶ What compassion is

- ▶ Relationship between equals
- ▶ Compassion can be real when we recognize our shared humanity
- ▶ Acceptance of ourselves and others

## Boundaries and Compassion

- We have a fear of setting boundaries and making people accountable
- Making people accountable is more work than blaming
- We are more compassionate and feel less judgment, resentment and anger when we set appropriate boundaries for ourselves and others
- 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

## 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

- 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

**#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*

## Wholehearted Guideposts

**#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

## 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 to criticism

## #2 Cultivating Self-Compassion **letting go of perfectionism**

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

## Perfectionism is on a continuum

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

## 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

Mindfulness - balanced approach to negative feelings

Self-Compassion Scale - Dr. Neff [www.self-compassion.org](http://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.
- 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

## 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
- We cannot selectively numb emotions. When we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions.

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**Spirituality/Faith is Necessary for Resilience**

## #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.

# #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 you decide to be Wholehearted**

# #6 Cultivating Creativity

## Letting Go of Comparison

- ▶ Wholehearted people create
- ▶ Everyone can 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

- ▶ 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

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

- ▶ Wholehearted people are not anxiety-free but they are anxiety- aware.
- ▶ *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

## **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**

## #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
- ▶ Using our gifts and talents to create meaningful work takes commitment
- ▶ Like our Gifts and Talents, meaning is unique to each one of us
- ▶ Barriers to Meaningful work
  - ▶ Self-doubt - letting our fear undermine our faith
  - ▶ Supposed - to.....

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

*“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

- ▶ **D**eliberate in thought and behavior
- ▶ **I**nspired to make new and different choices
- ▶ **G**oing - take action