



**DARE TO LEAD**

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## THE BOOK

Dare To Lead  
By Brené Brown

## INTRODUCTION

**Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.**

To produce this game-changing publication, Researcher, Author and Speaker Brené Brown conducted in-depth interviews with leaders and change-makers. She asked them all what it really takes to be a great leader. As the book explains, leading is not about being the boss, pointing out people's failures or being an untouchable figure within your school or organisation. A 'Daring Leader' has an in-depth understanding of people's fears and instincts when it comes to a team environment. They choose courage over comfort, are actively curious and embrace vulnerability to set an example and bring out the best in others. Dare to Lead explains how to break down your own leadership style and understand why you and the people around you behave in certain ways. It also shares strategies for managing difficult conversations and situations. This book is ideal for anyone who wants to improve the way they communicate, build a braver, more daring culture within their organisation and feel more confident in their approach to leadership.

**"I define a leader as anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential."**

**"The courage to be vulnerable is not about winning or losing, it's about the courage to show up when you can't predict or control the outcome."**

**"Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind."**

**"If we want people to fully show up, to bring their whole selves including their unarmored, whole hearts—so that we can innovate, solve problems, and serve people—we have to be vigilant about creating a culture in which people feel safe, seen, heard, and respected."**

**"At the end of the day, at the end of the week, at the end of my life, I want to say I contributed more than I criticized."**



## 5 BEST QUOTES



## 10 BIG IDEAS

## 1. THE WORLD NEEDS BETTER LEADERS

From corporations, nonprofits and public sector organisations to governments, activist groups, schools and faith communities, we desperately need more leaders who are committed to courageous, wholehearted leadership and who are self-aware enough to lead from their hearts, rather than unevolved leaders who lead from a place of hurt and fear. Being a better leader is not a simple thing. Brené Brown and her team interviewed thousands of leaders to break down techniques which can transform workplaces and schools.

## 2. 10 BIG PROBLEMS

1. We avoid tough conversations, including giving honest, productive feedback. This leads to a lack of clarity, trust and engagement.
2. Instead of acknowledging and addressing fears, we instead try to manage the resulting behaviours.
3. Diminished trust is caused by a lack of connection and empathy.
4. Not enough people take smart risks and share bold ideas. They are afraid of being put down or ridiculed for trying and failing.
5. We get stuck and defined by setbacks, disappointments and failures.
6. There is too much shame and blame, and not enough accountability and learning.
7. People opt out of vital conversations about diversity and inclusivity because they fear looking wrong.
8. When something goes wrong, people fail to properly identify the problem and take steps to solve it.
- 9.. Organisational values are assessed in terms of aspirations rather than actual behaviours which can be taught, measured and evaluated.
10. Perfectionism and fear keep people from learning and growing.

## 3. RUMBLING WITH VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is the feeling we experience during times of uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. It is not a weakness and it is not something which affects some people but not others. Being vulnerable doesn't mean sharing every detail about your personal life with others. The term 'Rumbling with vulnerability' refers to creating an atmosphere of trust, where people feel like they can have an open and honest conversation. Gather your team or class and 'rumble' by making it acceptable for people to show their weaknesses or say the wrong thing.



10 BIG IDEAS

#### 4. THE CALL TO COURAGE

Brené writes about how being 'unclear is unkind', saying that feeding people half-truths to make them feel better is unkind. As a leader, you need to be clear about your expectations and you need to talk to people rather than about them. Instead of being defensive, respond to feedback by asking for clarity and having difficult conversations. All of this takes courage. When you choose courage over comfort, you put your personal fears about predicted outcomes to one side and keep asking questions. You stay curious and stop talking so people have space to say what they need.

#### 5. THE ARMOURY

The armour we shroud ourselves in as leaders includes perfectionism, emotional stoicism, compartmentalising work and believing yourself to be all-knowing. However, as Brené explains, "When we imprison the heart, we kill courage." We become disembodied from our emotions and instead of gaining control, we lose it. Our egos don't like us to be vulnerable or curious. They crave approval and admiration, which can force us into self-protection mode. Ego also creates the fear that if we are not a 'viking', we are a 'victim'. Brené's approach is 'soft front, strong back, wild heart'. She recommends staying vulnerable and curious at the front, having 'grounded confidence' (see point 7) and vulnerability at the back and staying 'wild' by not giving into the bullsh\*t that reduces us. To be a daring leader, don't armour yourself by pretending to know everything, hiding behind cynicism or using criticism as self-protection. Value the contributions others have to make and catch people doing the right thing.

#### 6. SHAME AND EMPATHY

Shame is the 'never good enough' emotion. It makes us feel unworthy of connection, belonging or love. This feeling is universal but many of us fail to talk about it, which leads to it controlling our lives. As a leader, you can build resilience in yourself and your team by recognising shame and understanding its triggers, practising critical awareness, reaching out when we feel alone and 'speaking shame'. Empathy recognises shame and acts as a connecting, trust-building tool. Empathy is saying, "I know that feeling and it sucks", or "You're not alone". It doesn't mean trying to immediately solve someone's problems, but instead letting your friend or colleague know you understand what they are going through.



## 10 BIG IDEAS

## 7. GROUNDED CONFIDENCE AND CURIOSITY

Grounded confidence is the messy process of learning and unlearning, practising and failing and surviving a few misses. It is not blustery, arrogant or built on bullsh\*t. Once we witness how courage can transform the way we lead, we can trade the heavy armour for grounded confidence that lifts us up and supports our efforts to be brave. Brené defines curiosity as an act of vulnerability and courage. It is correlated with creativity, intelligence, improved learning and memory as well as problem-solving. The brain's chemistry is believed to change when we become curious, helping us to learn and retain information. Having the confidence to be curious and say "Tell me more" or "What problem are we trying to solve?" can help drive better learning experiences.

## 8. LIVING INTO OUR VALUES

More often than not, our values are what lead us to do uncomfortable, daring things. We also need our values to remind us why we entered a new arena. Daring leaders carry 'clarity of values' with them. These values are, "principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life." Daring leaders live into their values by practising them as well as professing them. They are clear about what they believe and hold important and they take care that their words, thoughts and behaviours align with those beliefs. It can take some time to figure out your core values but once you have defined them you will find it easier to find your way in the dark.

## 9. BRAVING TRUST

Trust is the glue that holds teams and organisations together. Many successful organisations regard it as a 'must-have' rather than a 'nice to have'. People who are trustworthy respect boundaries, are reliable and are accountable for their actions. They do not share information that is not theirs to share and they choose to do the right thing. Trustworthy people avoid judging others and are generous when interpreting the actions of others. Trust is built in small moments, not blanket statements or grand actions. Being a trusted leader means regularly checking your actions and asking yourself if they meet the right standards.

## 10. LEARNING TO RISE

Daring leaders rise by getting up from their falls, overcoming their mistakes and facing hurt in a way that brings more wisdom and wholeheartedness into their lives. Brené highlights that almost all of us create 'stories' to fill in blanks. For example, "He gave me a dirty look in that meeting because he doesn't think I can get the job done." When you're learning to rise, you pay attention to this thought and get curious about it. You follow up on your 'story' and find out the real truth. Then you address the truth and practice staying calm in your response.

**3 ACTION STEPS**

Every point in Dare to Lead highlights that becoming a great leader takes time, commitment and an openness to change, trust and ongoing self-development. To start the journey, take the following steps:

**1. DEFINE YOUR VALUES**

What are the core beliefs you choose to live by? Try to stick with two and be clear on why you choose them.

**2. ASK FOR MORE**

Daring leaders practice courage and vulnerability by asking for more detail and information. They stay curious, connect with their teams and earn trust by taking the time to talk things through.

**3. BE VULNERABLE**

Allowing a more vulnerable side of yourself to show doesn't mean you are weak. Instead, it makes you more human. It opens your workplace up to fearless conversations, new ideas, greater understanding and amazing new things.

Talk to your team about vulnerability so they understand what you are doing and can practice it themselves.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The traditional idea of an all-knowing leader who rules through fear and never puts a foot wrong is dead in the water.

In these fast-moving times of change and innovation, no leader can know it all. And in a world where people have choice, leaders cannot force people to stick around.

Those who Dare to Lead and do it well are connected and curious.

They show courage by admitting what they don't know and facing up to difficult conversations.

They aim to continually improve, have clear values and stick to them when things get tough.

**The key message throughout the book is to slow down and have conversations. Talk to your team to get clear on what they need from you and why they may behave the way they do. Create a culture of openness so people aren't afraid to ask for what they need to be better at their jobs.**



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