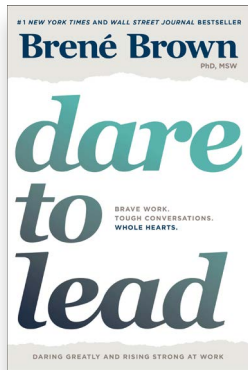


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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Dare to Lead

THE SUMMARY

Penguin Random House 2018

Introduction

We started our interviews with senior leaders with one question. *What, if anything, about the way people are leading today needs to change in order for leaders to be successful in a complex, rapidly changing environment where we're faced with seemingly intractable challenges and an insatiable demand for innovation?* There was one answer across the interviews. We need braver leaders and more courageous cultures. As we continued our research, here is what we learned.

You can't get to courage without rumbling with vulnerability. Embrace the suck. At the heart of daring leadership is a deeply human truth that is rarely acknowledged, especially at work. Courage and fear are not mutually exclusive. Most of us feel brave and afraid at the exact same time. We feel vulnerable sometimes all day long.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again...who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly." During those "in the arena" moments that Roosevelt described, when we're pulled between our fear and our call to courage, we need shared language, skills, tools, and daily practices that can support us through the rumble.

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The word rumble has become more than just a weird *West Side Story* way to say, “Let’s have a real conversation, even if it’s tough.” It’s become a serious intention and a behavioral cue or reminder. A rumble is a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous, to stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving, to take a break and circle back when necessary, to be fearless in owning our parts, and, as psychologist Harriet Lerner teaches, to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard. More than anything else, when someone says, “Let’s rumble,” it cues me to show up with an open heart and mind so we can serve the work and each other, not our egos.

Our research led to a very clear, very hopeful finding. Courage is a collection of four skill sets that can be taught, observed, and measured. The four skill sets are: Rumbling with Vulnerability, Living into Our Values, Braving Trust, and Learning to Rise. The foundational skill of courage-building is the willingness and ability to rumble with vulnerability. Without this core skill, the other three skill sets are impossible to put into practice. Our ability to be daring leaders will never be greater than our capacity for vulnerability. Once we start to build vulnerability skills, we can start to develop the other skill sets.

Self-awareness and self-love matter. Who we are is how we lead. So often we think of courage as an inherent trait; however, it is less about who people are, and more about how they behave and show up in difficult situations. Fear is the emotion at the center of that list of problematic behaviors and culture issues—it’s precisely what you’d expect to find as the underlying barrier to courage. However, all of the daring leaders we interviewed talked about experiencing many types of fear on a regular basis, which means that feeling fear is not the barrier.

The true underlying obstacle to brave leadership is how we respond to our fear. The real barrier to daring leadership is our armor—the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that we use to protect ourselves when we aren’t willing and able to rumble with vulnerability.

Courage is contagious. To scale daring leadership and build courage in teams and organizations, we have to cultivate a culture in which brave work, tough conversations, and whole hearts are the expectation, and armor is not necessary or rewarded. 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. Daring leaders must care for and be connected to the people they lead.

The data made clear that care and connection are irreducible requirements for wholehearted, productive relationships between leaders and team members. This means that if we do not have a sense of caring toward someone we lead and/or we don’t feel connected to that person, we have two options. Develop the caring and connection or find a leader who’s a better fit. There’s no shame in this—we’ve all experienced the kind of disconnection that doesn’t get better despite our strongest efforts. Understanding that commitment to care and connection is the minimum threshold, we need real courage to recognize when we can’t fully serve the people we lead.

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If the culture in our school, organization, place of worship, or even family requires armor because of issues like racism, classism, sexism, or any manifestation of fear-based leadership, we can't expect wholehearted engagement. Likewise, when our organization rewards armoring behaviors like blaming, shaming, cynicism, perfectionism, and emotional stoicism, we can't expect innovative work. You can't fully grow and contribute behind armor. It takes a massive amount of energy just to carry it around—sometimes it takes all of our energy.

PART ONE: RUMBLING WITH VULNERABILITY

Section One: The Moment and the Myths

In *Daring Greatly*, I wrote about four myths surrounding vulnerability, but since I've brought the courage-building work into organizations and have been doing it with leaders, there are clearly six misguided myths that persist across wide variables including gender, age, race, country, ability, and culture.

Myth #1: Vulnerability is weakness. It used to take me a long time to dispel the myths that surround vulnerability, especially the myth that vulnerability is weakness. In 2014, standing across from several hundred military Special Forces soldiers on a base in the Midwest, I decided to stop evangelizing, and I nailed my argument with a single question. I looked at these brave soldiers and said, "Vulnerability is the emotion that we experience during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. Can you give me a single example of courage that you've witnessed in another soldier or experienced in your own life that did not require experiencing vulnerability?" Complete silence. Crickets. Finally, a young man spoke up. He said, "No, ma'am. Three tours. I can't think of a single act of courage that doesn't require managing massive vulnerability."

Myth #2: I don't do vulnerability. Our daily lives are defined by experiences of uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. There is no opting out, but there are options. You can do vulnerability, or it can do you. Choosing to own our vulnerability and do it consciously means learning how to rumble with this emotion and understand how it drives our thinking and behavior so we can stay aligned with our values and live in our integrity. Pretending that we don't do vulnerability means letting fear drive our thinking and behavior without our input or even awareness, which almost always leads to acting out or shutting down.

Myth #3: I can go it alone. The third myth surrounding vulnerability is "I can go it alone." One line of defense that I encounter is "I don't need to be vulnerable because I don't need anyone." I'm with you. Some days I wish it were true. The problem, however, is that needing no one pushes against everything we know about human neurobiology. We are hardwired for connection. From our mirror neurons to language, we are a social species. In the absence of authentic connection, we suffer. By authentic I mean the kind of connection that doesn't require hustling for acceptance and changing who we are to fit in.

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Myth #4: You can engineer the uncertainty and discomfort out of vulnerability. Regardless of how we approach vulnerability, once we try to strip uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure from the relational experience, we bankrupt courage by definition. Again, we know that courage is four skill sets with vulnerability at the center. So the bad news is that there's no app for it and regardless of what you do and where you work, you're called to be brave in vulnerability even if your job is engineering the vulnerability out of systems.

The good news is that if we can successfully develop the four courage-building skills, starting with how to rumble with vulnerability, we will have the capacity for something deeply human, invaluable to leadership, and unattainable by machines.

Myth #5: Trust comes before vulnerability. We need to trust to be vulnerable, and we need to be vulnerable in order to build trust. The research participants described trust as a slow-building, iterative, and layered process that happens over time. Both trust-building and rumbling with vulnerability involve risk. That's what makes courage hard and rare.

Myth #6: Vulnerability is disclosure. Google's five-year study on highly productive teams, Project Aristotle, found that psychological safety—team members feeling safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other—was “far and away the most important of the five dynamics that set successful teams apart.”

Items that frequently show up as things that get in the way of psychological safety in teams and groups include judgment, unsolicited advice giving, interrupting, and sharing outside the team meeting. The behaviors that people need from their team or group almost always include listening, staying curious, being honest, and keeping confidence. Dare to lead by investing twenty minutes in creating psychological safety when you need to rumble. Make your intention of creating safety explicit and get your team's help on how to do it effectively.

We know that vulnerability is the cornerstone of courage-building, but we often fail to realize that without vulnerability there is no creativity or innovation. Why? There is nothing more uncertain than the creative process, so there is absolutely no innovation without failure. Show me a culture in which vulnerability is framed as weakness and I'll show you a culture struggling to come up with fresh ideas and new perspectives.

Adaptability to change, hard conversations, feedback, problem solving, ethical decision making, recognition, resilience, and all of the other skills that underpin daring leadership are born of vulnerability. To foreclose on vulnerability and our emotional life out of fear that the costs will be too high is to walk away from the very thing that gives purpose and meaning to living. As the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio reminds us, “We are not necessarily thinking machines. We are feeling machines that think.”

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Section Two: The Call to Courage

When we're in fear, or an emotion is driving self-protection, there's a fairly predictable pattern of how we assemble our armor, piece by piece:

1. I'm not enough.
2. If I'm honest with them about what's happening, they'll think less of me or maybe even use it against me.
3. No way am I going to be honest about this. No one else does it. Why do I have to put myself out there?
4. Yeah. Screw them. I don't see them being honest about what scares them. And they've got plenty of issues.
5. It's actually their issues and shortcomings that make me act this way. This is their fault, and they're trying to blame me.
6. In fact, now that I think about it, I'm actually better than them.

People think it's a long walk from "I'm not enough" to "I'm better than them," but it's actually just standing still. In the exact same place. In fear. Assembling the armor.

I don't want to live in fear or lead from fear, and I'm sick to death of the armor. Courage and faith are my core values, and when I'm in fear I show up in ways that leave me feeling out of alignment with these values and outside my integrity. This is when I remember Joseph Campbell's quote, which I believe is one of the purest calls to courage for leaders. "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek." What is the treasure I seek? Less fear, scarcity, and anxiety. Less feeling alone. More working together toward goals that excite all of us.

Here's what I know to be true from my experience and what I consider to be one of the most important learning from this research. Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fears and feelings, or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior. What this means is that we must find the courage to get curious and possibly surface emotions and emotional experiences that people can't articulate or that might be happening outside their awareness. If we find ourselves addressing the same problematic behaviors over and over, we may need to dig deeper to the thinking and feeling driving those behaviors.

After the third one-on-one addressing the same issue, it's easy to make up the story that this person is just being difficult or even testing us. But what I've found in my own experience is that we haven't

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gone deep enough. We haven't peeled away enough layers of the onion. Once we start peeling, we have to leave long pauses and empty space. I know the conversation is hard enough, but people need white space. Stop talking. Even if it's awkward—which it will be the first fifteen times.

When they start talking (which they normally will), listen. Really listen. Don't formulate your response while talking. If you have a great insight—hold it. Don't do that thing where the listener starts nodding faster and faster, not because they're actively listening but because they're trying to unconsciously signal the talker to wrap up so they can talk. Keep lots of space in the conversation. Another thing to note is that when we're in tough with people, we can't take responsibility for their emotions. They're allowed to be pissed or sad or surprised or elated. If their behaviors are not okay, we set the boundaries:

- I know this is a tough conversation. Being angry is okay. Yelling is not okay.
- I know we're tired and stressed. This has been a long meeting. Being frustrated is okay. Interrupting people and rolling your eyes is not okay.
- I appreciate the passion around these different opinions and ideas. The emotion is okay. Passive-aggressive comments and put-downs are not okay.

Also, don't forget one of our favorite rumble tools, which is the time-out. When rumbles become unproductive, call a time-out. Give everyone ten minutes to walk around outside or catch their breath. In our organization, everyone is empowered to call a time-out. We all do it when we need it.

Sometimes a team member will say, "I need time to think about what I'm hearing. Can we take an hour and circle back after lunch?" I really appreciate that because it leads to better decision making. Giving people a reasonable amount of thinking time cuts down on the meeting-after-the-meeting and back-channeling which are both outside what's okay in our culture.

Just remember, we can't do our jobs when we own other people's emotions or take responsibility for them as a way to control the related behaviors, for one simple reason. Other's emotions are not our jobs. We can't both serve people and try to control their feelings.

Section Three: The Armory

At the center of all our elaborate personal security measures and protection schemes lies the most precious treasure of the human experience: the heart. In addition to serving as the life-giving muscle that keeps blood pumping through our body, it's the universal metaphor for our capacity to love and be loved, and it's the symbolic gateway to our emotional lives.

I've always talked about living with an unarmored heart as wholeheartedness. In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, I define wholeheartedness as "engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, *No matter*

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what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough. It's going to bed at night thinking, Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am brave, and worthy of love and belonging."

Wholeheartedness captures the essence of a fully examined emotional life and a liberated heart, one that is free and vulnerable enough to love and be loved and a heart that is equally free and vulnerable to be broken and hurt. Rather than protecting and hiding our heart behind bullet-proof glass, wholeheartedness is about integration. It's integrating our thinking, feeling, and behavior. It's putting down the armor and bringing forth all of the scraggly, misshapen pieces of our history and folding in all of the roles that, when falsely separated, keep us feeling exhausted and torn, to make a complex, messy, awesome, whole person. I love that the Latin root of the word integrate is integrare, "to make whole."

There are definitely some companies that embrace wholeheartedness, but what I often observe is that many organizational cultures and leaders still subscribe to the myth that if we sever the heart (vulnerability and other emotions) from our work, we'll be more productive, efficient, and (don't forget) easier to manage. At the very least, we'll be less messy and less...well, human. These beliefs lead us to consciously or unconsciously build cultures that require and reward armor.

The problem is that when we imprison the heart, we kill courage. In the same way that we depend on our physical heart to pump life-giving blood to every part of our body, we depend on our emotional heart to keep vulnerability coursing through the veins of courage and to engage all of the behaviors we talked about in the prior section, including trust, innovation, creativity, and accountability. When we become disembodied from our emotions to the point that we literally don't recognize which physical feelings are connected to which emotional feelings, we don't gain control, we lose it. Without our understanding or consent, emotions start driving our decision making and behavior while thinking is tied up in the trunk. On the other hand, when the heart is open and free and we're connected to our emotions and understand what they're telling us, new worlds open up for us. This includes better decision making and critical thinking, and the powerful experiences of empathy, self-compassion, and resilience.

Protecting our ego and fitting in is why we reach for armor in situations where we think being liked or respected is at risk because we may be wrong, or not have all of the answers, or might get in over our heads and not look smart enough. We also go on lockdown when our emotions may be perceived by others in a way that we can't manage or control. If I'm honest about how I'm feeling, will I be misunderstood, judged, seen as weak? Will my vulnerability change the way you think of me or my ability? All of these situations lead to the biggest threat to our ego and our sense of self-worth: shame. Shame is the feeling that washes over us and makes us feel so flawed that we question whether we're worthy of love, belonging, and connection.

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The irony across all self-protection is that at the same time as we're worrying about machine learning and artificial intelligence taking jobs and dehumanizing work, we're intentionally or unintentionally creating cultures that, instead of leveraging the unique gifts of the human heart like vulnerability, empathy, and emotional literacy, are trying to lock those gifts away. There are some things that machines and algorithms do better than us for the simple reasons of computing power, quicker elimination of variables that humans either don't see or won't readily dismiss, and the fact that machines have no ego. They don't need to be right to protect their self-worth, so they don't defend or rationalize, they simply recalculate and recalibrate in an instant.

The hopeful news is that there are some tasks that humans will always be able to do better than machines if we are willing to take off our armor and leverage our greatest and most unique asset—the human heart. Those of us who are willing to rumble with vulnerability, live into our values, build trust, and learn to reset will not be threatened by the rise of the machines, because we will be part of the rise of daring leaders.

Section Four: Shame and Empathy

Looking for shame in organizations is like inspecting a home for termites. If you walk through a house and actually spot termites, you have an acute problem that's probably been going on for awhile. If you walk through an office or school or place of worship and you actually see shame—you see a manager berating an employee or a teacher belittling a student or clergy using shame as a control mechanism or an activist using shame as a social justice tool—you're witnessing a full-blown threat to your culture. You have to figure out how and why it's happening and deal with it immediately (and without shame).

What's trickier is that in most cases, shame is hidden behind the walls of organizations. It's not dormant—it's slowly eating away at innovation, trust, connection, and culture—but it's tougher to spot. Here's what to look for: perfectionism, favoritism, gossiping, back-channeling, comparison, self-worth tied to productivity, harassment, discrimination, power over, bullying, blaming, teasing, and cover-ups.

These are all behavioral cues that shame has permeated a culture. A more obvious sign is if shame has become an outright management tool. Is there evidence of people in leadership roles bullying others, criticizing subordinates in front of colleagues, delivering public reprimands, or setting up reward systems that intentionally embarrass, shame, or humiliate people?

Perhaps the most devastating sign of a shame infestation is a cover-up. Cover-ups are perpetrated not only by the original actors, but by a culture of complicity and shame. Sometimes individuals are complicit because staying quiet or hiding the truth benefits them and/or doesn't jeopardize their influence or power. Other times, people are complicit because it's the norm—they work in a cover-up culture that uses shame to keep people quiet.

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Either way, when the culture of a corporation, nonprofit, university, government, church, sports program, school, or family mandates that it is more important to protect the reputation of that system and those in power than it is to protect the basic human dignity of individuals or communities, you can be certain of the following problems:

- Shame is systemic
- Complicity is part of the culture
- Money and power trump ethics
- Accountability is dead
- Control and fear are management tools
- There's a trail of devastation and pain

Shame resilience is the ability to practice authenticity when we experience shame, to move through the experience without sacrificing our values, and to come out on the other side of the shame experience with more courage, compassion, and connection than we had going into it. Ultimately, shame resilience is about moving from shame to empathy—the real antidote to shame.

Empathy is one of the linchpins of cultures built on connection and trust—it's also an essential ingredient for teams who take risks and show up for rumbles. Empathy is easily confused with sympathy, giving advice, and judgment disguised as concern. To add empathy to our courage toolbox, it's important that we be able to translate it into specific skills that we can learn and practice, readily distinguish empathy from sympathy, and understand the big barriers to empathy.

Empathy is a choice. It's a vulnerable choice, because if I were to choose to connect with you through empathy, I would have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling. In the face of a difficult conversation, when we see that someone's hurt or in pain, it's our instinct as human beings to try to make things better. We want to fix, we want to give advice. Empathy isn't about fixing, it's the brave choice to be with someone in their darkness—not to race to turn on the light so we feel better.

If I share something with you that's difficult for me, I'd rather you say, "I don't even know what to say right now, I'm just so glad you told me." A response can rarely make something better. Connection is what heals. If struggle is being down in a hole, empathy is not jumping into the hole with someone who is struggling and taking on their emotions, or owning their struggle as yours to fix. If their issues become yours, now you have two people stuck in a hole. Not helpful. Boundaries are important here. We have to know where we end and others begin if we really want to show up with empathy.

Empathy is a hard skill to learn because mastery requires practice, and practice means you'll screw it up big-time more than once. That's how practice works. If you're not willing to miss 3,759 shots from the free throw line, you'll never be consistently good at making those shots. In many of our empathy workshops, we ask the participants to sign a poster that says "I agree to practice empathy, screw it up, girdle back, clean it up, and try again." Make that commitment to yourself, your team, your friends,

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and your family. You have no idea how much it means to someone when you circle back and say, “You shared something hard with me, and I wish I had shown up in a different way. I really care about you and what you shared. Can I try again?” That’s daring leadership.

Section Five: Curiosity and Grounded Confidence

In tough conversations, hard meetings, and emotionally charged decision making, leaders need the grounded confidence to stay tethered to their values, respond rather than react emotionally, and operate from self-awareness, not self-protection. Having the rumbling skills to hold the tension and discomfort allows us to give care and attention to others, stay open and curious. Vulnerability never becomes comfortable, but practicing means that when vulnerability is washing over us, we can hear grounded confidence whisper in our ear, “This is hard and awkward, and uncomfortable. You may not know how it’s going to turn out, but you are strong and you have practiced what it takes to create and hold the space for this.”

Grounded Confidence = Rumble Skills + Curiosity + Practice. Curiosity is an act of vulnerability and courage. Researchers are finding evidence that curiosity is correlated with creativity, intelligence, improved learning and memory, and problem solving. A study published in the October 22, 2014, issue of the journal *Neuron* suggests that the brain’s chemistry changes when we become curious, helping us better learn and retain information. Curiosity is uncomfortable because it involves uncertainty and vulnerability.

In his book *Curious: The Desire to Know and Why Your Future Depends on It*, Ian Leslie writes, “Curiosity is unruly. It doesn’t like rules, or, at least, it assumes that all rules are provisional, subject to the laceration of a smart question nobody has yet thought to ask. It disdains the approved pathways, preferring diversions, unplanned excursions, impulsive left turns. In short, curiosity is deviant.”

This is exactly why curiosity leads to grounded confidence in rumble skills. We’re scared to have hard conversations because we can’t control the path or outcome, and we start coming out of our skin when we don’t get to resolution fast enough. It’s as if we’d rather have a bad solution that leads to action than stay in the uncertainty of problem identification. Einstein is one of our best curiosity and confidence mentors. I love two of his sayings. “If I had an hour to solve a problem, I’d spend fifty-five minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions.” He also reportedly said, “It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”

The knower in us (our ego) either races to beat everyone in the room with an answer that may or may not address the real issues, or thinks, *I don’t want to talk about this because I’m not sure how it’s going to go or how people are going to react. I might not say the right thing or have the right answers.* Curiosity says, *No worries. I love a wild ride. I’m up for wherever this goes or however long it takes to get to the heart of the problem. I don’t have to know the answers or say the right thing, I just have to keep listening and keep questioning.*

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To lead effectively, you must be responsible for respecting and leveraging the different views and stay curious about how they can often conflict. When rumbles start to get tough, we know to check in on horizon issues. While we may have different perspectives and may not share the same level of knowledge about every detail of the organization, we must have a shared reality of the current state of the organization. Horizon conflict doesn't give us permission to lose focus on the organization as a whole. I can't be so concerned with the five-year goal that I don't know about a culture issue that we need to address.

When I was researching and writing *Rising Strong*, I learned that the most common barrier to getting curious is having "a dry well." In his 1994 article "The Psychology of Curiosity," George Loewenstein introduced his information gap perspective on curiosity. Loewenstein, a professor of economics and psychology at Carnegie Mellon University, proposed that curiosity is the feeling of deprivation we experience when we identify and focus on a gap in our knowledge. What's important about this perspective is that it means we have to have some level of knowledge or awareness before we can get curious. We aren't curious about something we are unaware of or know nothing about. Loewenstein explains that simply encouraging people to ask questions doesn't go very far toward stimulating curiosity. He writes, "To induce curiosity about a particular topic, it may be necessary to 'prime the pump'" which means to use intriguing information to get folks interested so they become more curious.

The good news is that if you've read up to this point in the book, you're primed and ready to go. We may not know enough or have enough practice nailing every rumble, but we know enough to get curious. A growing number of researchers believe that curiosity and knowledge-building grow together meaning the more we know, the more we want to know.

PART TWO: LIVING INTO OUR VALUES

In those moments when we start putting other voices in front of our own, we forget what made us go into the arena in the first place, the reason we're there. We forget our values. Frequently we don't even know what they are or how to name them. If we do not have clarity of values, if we don't have anywhere else to look or focus, if we don't have that light up above to remind us why we're there, the cynics and the critics can bring us to our knees. More often than not, our values are what lead us to the arena door—we're willing to do something uncomfortable and daring because of our beliefs. When we get in there and stumble or fall, we need our values to remind us why we went in, especially when we are facedown, covered in dust and sweat and blood.

While courage requires checking our armor and weapons at the arena door, we do not have to enter every tough conversation and difficult rumble completely empty-handed. Living into our values means that we do more than profess our values, we practice them. We walk our talk—we are clear about what we believe and hold important, and we take care that our intentions, words, thoughts, and behaviors align with those beliefs. Living into our values requires some upfront work contemplation that most of us have never taken the time to do.

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Step One: We Can't Live into Values That We Can't Name. The first step of living into our values is divining what's most important to us. What is our North Star? What values do we hold most sacred? We can't work to stay aligned with values when we haven't spent any time getting curious about, or naming, what we care about most.

Choose one or two values—the beliefs that are most important and dear to you, that help you find your way in the dark, which fill you with a feeling of purpose. As you read them, you should feel a deep resonance of self-identification. Resist holding on to words that resemble something you've been coached to be, that have never felt true for you.

Step Two: Taking Values from BS to Behavior. If not going to take the time to translate values from ideals to behaviors—if you're not going to teach people the skills they need to show up in a way that's aligned with those values and then create a culture in which you hold one another accountable for staying aligned with the values—it's better not to profess any values at all. They become a joke. A cat poster. Total BS.

In this second Step of the Living into Our process, we need to define three or four behaviors that support our values and three or four “slippery behaviors”—actions we find ourselves tempted to do even though they are counter to our values. Get explicit. There's no magic in three or four behaviors—it's just enough to force us to think beyond what's easy and not so many that we're just making a list. The best way to do this is to think through some arena moments when you either did or did not show up in a way that felt aligned with your values.

Step Three: Empathy and Self-Compassion: The Two Most Important Seats in the Arena. Regardless of the values you pick, daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things. Silence is not brave leadership, and silence is not a component of brave cultures. Showing up and being courageous around difficult conversations is not a path you can pre-determine. A brave leader is not someone who is armed with all the answers. A brave leader is not someone who can facilitate a flawless discussion on hard topics. A brave leader is someone who says *I see you. I hear you. I don't have all the answers, but I'm going to keep listening and asking questions.* We all have the capacity to do that. We all have the ability to foster empathy. If we want to do good work, it's imperative that we continue to flesh out these harder conversations, to push against secrecy, silence, and judgment. It's the only way to eradicate shame from the workplace, to clear the way for a performance in the arena that correlates with our highest values and not the fear mongers from the stands.

What does it feel like when I'm living into my values? I used to believe that we would always know we're in our values when the decision comes easily, but I've learned as a leader that it's actually the opposite. I know I'm in my values when a decision is somewhere between tough and really tough. I wish doing the right thing was the easy thing, but it rarely is. I no longer expect wonderful moments. Instead, I look for quiet moments when I feel strong and solid and, usually, tired. To quote Leonard Cohen, as I often do about the tough arena moments, “Love is not a victory march. It's a cold and it's a broken hallelujah.”

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PART THREE: BRAVING TRUST

I've seen the word trust turn an openhearted person into a Transformer in a matter of seconds. Just the slightest inkling that someone is questioning our trustworthiness is enough to set total vulnerability lockdown in motion. You can almost see it happening. Shields engaged? Check. Armor up? Check. Heart closed? Check. Defenses activated? Check.

Once we're in lockdown, we can't really hear or process anything that's being said because we've been hijacked by the limbic system and we're in emotional survival mode. We all want to believe that we are trustworthy, even though, ironically, many of us struggle to trust others. Most people believe they're completely trustworthy, yet they trust only a handful of their colleagues. The math just doesn't work, because believing we're trustworthy and being perceived as trustworthy by others are two different things.

Charles Feltman's definitions of trust and distrust are completely aligned with how our research participants talked about trust. In *The Thin Book of Trust*, Feltman defines trust as "choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person's actions." He describes distrust as deciding that "what is important to me is not safe with this person in this situation (or any situation)."

Just reading those definitions helps us understand why we can go full-on Transformer when we talk about trust. How terrible would it be to hear someone say, "Brené, what is important to me is not safe with you in this situation, or really in any situation." It would be awful because, true or not, it threatens how I see myself on one of the most important dimensions of a social species. No trust, no connection.

Talking about trust is tough, and because these conversations have the potential to go sideways fast, we often avoid the rumble which is even more dangerous. First, when we're struggling with trust and don't have the tools or skills to talk about it directly with the person involved, it leads us to talk about people instead of to them. It also leads to lots of energy-wasting zigzagging. Both are major values violations in our organization, and I bet they conflict with most of our personal values too.

Second, trust is the glue that holds teams and organizations together. We ignore trust issues at the expense of our own performance, and the expense of our team's and organization's success.

Our team dug into trust and identified seven behaviors that make up the anatomy of trust. I came up with an acronym—BRAVING—for the behaviors that define trust. I think it's a good name for the inventory because it reminds us that trust is a vulnerable and courageous process.

Boundaries: You respect my boundaries, and when you're not clear about what's okay and not okay, you ask. You're willing to say no.

Reliability: You do what you say you'll do. At work this means staying aware of your competencies and limitations so you don't over promise, and are able to deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities.

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Accountability: You own your mistakes, apologize, and make amends.

Vault: You don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share. I need to know that my confidences are kept, and that you're not sharing with me any information about other people that should be confidential.

Integrity: You choose courage over comfort. You choose what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy. You choose to practice your values rather than simply profess them.

Non-judgment: I can ask for what I need, and you can ask for what you need. We can talk about how we feel without judgment. We can ask each other for help without judgment.

Generosity: You extend the most generous interpretation possible to the intentions, words, and actions of others.

While trust is inherently relational and most pronounced in practice with other people, the foundation of trust with others is really based on our ability to trust ourselves. Unfortunately, self-trust is one of the first casualties when we fail or experience disappointment or setbacks. Whether it's conscious or not, when we're wondering how we ended up face down in the arena, we often reach for the blanket statement. "I don't trust myself anymore." We assume that we must have made a bad decision and therefore it is a fallacy to count on ourselves to deliver.

You are in control of your relationship with self-trust, and you can hold yourself accountable where you might be falling short. This isn't always possible when you are working through BRAVING in relationship with someone else, where the absence of trust might be muddied by ambiguity of intention. When you're on the mat with yourself, it's much easier to put a spotlight on where you need to work.

As you begin to address those areas that need improvement, remember one of the founding concepts of this part. Trust is built in small moments. If you struggle with reliability, make small and doable promises to yourself that are easy to fulfill, until you get a flywheel of reliability going again. If you struggle with boundaries, set small ones with your partner—like you will not be responsible for both cooking and cleaning up dinner—until you are adept at putting boundaries into action in a more meaningful way. Never forget that we can't give people what we don't have.

PART FOUR: LEARNING TO RISE

One of the most unexpected findings that emerged from the leadership research is about the timing of teaching skills for rising or resilience. Often, leaders and executive coaches gather people together and try to teach resilience skills after there's been a setback or failure. It turns out that's like teaching first-time skydivers how to land after they hit the ground. Or, maybe worse, as they're free-falling.

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The Learning to Rise process is about getting up from our falls, overcoming our mistakes, and facing hurt in a way that brings more wisdom and wholeheartedness into our lives. As tough as it is, the payoff is huge. When we have the courage to walk into our story and own it, we get to write the ending. When we don't own our stories of failure, setbacks, and hurt—they own us.

We are emotional beings, and when something hard happens to us, emotion drives. Cognition or thinking is not sitting shotgun next to behavior in the cab of the truck. Thinking and behavior are hog-tied in the back, and emotion is driving like a bat out of hell. Risers immediately recognize when emotionally hooked by something and then they get curious about it. We don't have to pinpoint the emotion accurately—we just need to recognize that we're feeling something. There will be time to sort out exactly what we're feeling later. The reckoning is as simple as knowing that we're emotionally hooked and then getting curious about it.

How do we recognize that we've been snagged by emotion? From the wisest part of us, meaning our body. We call emotions feelings because we feel them in our bodies. We have a physiological response to emotions. Risers are connected to their bodies, and when emotion knocks, they feel it and they pay attention. Here's the hard news about this process. Very few people make it through the reckoning, for one reason. Instead of feeling our emotions and getting curious, we offload them onto others. We literally take that ball of emotional energy welling up inside us and hurl it toward other people.

This is going to sound weird, but the most effective strategy for staying with emotion instead of offloading it is something I learned from a yoga teacher and from a few members of the military Special Forces. It's breathing. The yoga teacher called it box breathing. The soldiers called it tactical breathing. Turns out they're the same thing. Former Green Beret Mark Miller explains tactical breathing this way:

1. Inhale deeply through your nose, expanding your stomach, for a count of four.
2. Hold in that breath for a count of four.
3. Slowly exhale all the air through your mouth, contracting your stomach, for a count of four.
4. Hold the empty breath for a count of four.

Breathing is also the key to another strategy for reckoning with emotion, which is practicing calm. I define calm as creating perspective and mindfulness while managing emotional reactivity. Calm is a superpower because it is the balm that heals one of the most prevalent workplace stressors: anxiety.

Practicing calm creates the clearing we need to get emotionally grounded. The bad news is that anxiety is one of the most contagious emotions that we experience. This explains why anxiety can so easily become a function of groups, not individuals. It's too contagious to stay contained in one person. We've all had the experience of one person sending a group into a tailspin.

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The good news? Calm is equally contagious. Over the past twenty years, the most proficient practitioners of calm that I've interviewed all talked about the important (and weird) combination of breathing and curiosity. They talked about taking deep breaths before responding to questions or asking them; slowing down the pace of a frantic conversation by modeling slow speech, breathing, and fact finding; and even intentionally taking a few breaths before asking themselves a version of these two questions. Do I have enough information to freak out about this situation? If I do have enough data, will freaking out help? If the reckoning is how we walk into a tough story, the rumble is where we go to the mat with it and own it. The rumble starts with this universal truth. In the absence of data, we will always make up stories. It's how we are wired. Meaning making is in our biology, and when we're in struggle, our default is often to come up with a story that makes sense of what's happening and gives our brain information on how best to self-protect. It happens a hundred times a day at work. Our organizations are littered with stories that people make up because they don't have access to information.

The first story we make up is what we call the "shitty first draft," or the SFD. When it comes to our emotions, the first stories we make up—our SFDs—are definitely our fears and insecurities romping all over the place, making worst-case scenarios. In our SFDs, fear fills in the data gaps. What makes that scary is that stories based on limited real data and plentiful imagined data, blended into a coherent, emotional satisfying version of reality, are called conspiracy theories. Yes, we are all conspiracy theorists with our own stories, constantly filling in data gaps with our fears and insecurities.

In addition to attending to conspiracy theories, we also have to watch for confabulations. A confabulation is a lie told honestly. To confabulate is to replace missing information with something false that we believe to be true. Confabulation shows up at work when we share what we believe is factual information, but it's really just our opinion. It's when I look at my colleague and say, "We are all getting laid off in September. This whole group is being shut down and let go." Everyone panics and asks me how I know. "I know, I heard, I know it's true."

To move from what Margret Atwood calls "a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood" to a true story that you can address, these are the questions that risers need to rumble with:

1. What more do I need to learn and understand about the situation? What do I know objectively?
What assumptions am I making?
2. What more do I need to learn and understand about the other people in the story? What additional information do I need? What questions or clarifications might help?
3. What more do I need to learn and understand about myself? What's underneath my response?
What am I really feeling? What part did I play?

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Answering #1 and #2 means having the courage to address the conspiracies and confabulations. Answering #3 requires emotional literacy—being able to recognize and name emotions—the same skill set required in empathy and self-compassion.

The difference—the delta—between what we make up about our experiences and the truth we discover through the process of rumbling is where the meaning and wisdom of this experience live. The delta holds our key learning. We just have to be willing to walk into our stories and rumble.

As you think about your own path to daring leadership, remember Joseph Campbell's wisdom: "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek." Own the fear, find the cave, and write a new ending for yourself, for the people you're meant to serve and support, and for your culture. Choose courage over comfort. Choose whole hearts over armor. Finally, choose the great adventure of being brave and afraid at the exact same time.