



Companion Worksheet

READER WORKSHEET & BOOK CLUB GUIDE

Brené Brown, Ph.D., LMSW

How much we know and understand ourselves is critically important, but there is something that is even more essential to living a Wholehearted life: loving ourselves. (Preface, p. xi)

How do you understand the differentiation between self-awareness and self love? (p. xi)

I learned how to worry more about how I felt and less about “what people might think.” I was setting new boundaries and began to let go of my need to please, perform and perfect. I started saying no rather than sure (and being resentful and pissed off later). I began to say “Oh, hell yes!” rather than “Sounds fun, but I have lots of work to do” or “I’ll do that when I’m _____ (thinner, less busy, better prepared).” (Preface, p. xiii)

When or with whom are you most likely to say “yes” when you mean “no”?

Does that turn into resentment or blame?

What would it take for you to practice “no”?

Men and women who live Wholeheartedly do indeed DIG Deep. They just do it in a different way. When they're exhausted and overwhelmed, they get...

Deliberate in their thoughts and behaviors through prayer, meditation or simply seeing their intentions;

Inspired to make new and different choices;

Going. They take action. (p. 4)

How do you traditionally “dig deep”?

Can you think of a time in your life when you used a Wholehearted approach to DIG Deep? (p. 4)

The greatest gift of having done this work... is that I can recognize shame when it's happening... I also know that the very best thing to do when this is happening feels totally counterintuitive: Practice courage and reach out! We have to own our story and share it with someone who has earned the right to hear it, someone whom we can count on to respond with compassion. We need courage, compassion and connection. ASAP. (p. 9)

If we share our shame story with the wrong person, they can easily become one more piece of lying debris in an already dangerous storm. (p. 10)

Brené gives six examples of responses we want to avoid while we are feeling shame. Would you add any responses to the list? (p. 10)



Can you think of a time when you have reached out for connection and received one of these responses? (p. 10)

Can you think of a time when you have been the person someone reaches out to for connection and you gave one of these responses? (p. 10)

When we're looking for compassion, we need someone who is deeply rooted, able to bend, and, most of all, we need someone who embraces us for our strengths and struggles. We need to honor our struggle by sharing it with someone who has earned the right to hear it. When we're looking for compassion, it's about connecting with the right person at the right time about the right issue. (p. 11)

Whom do you reach out to for genuine compassion? Who reaches out to you for genuine compassion? (p. 11)

I realized that courage is one of the most important qualities that Wholehearted people have in common. And not just any kind of courage; I found that Wholeheartedness requires ordinary courage. (p. 12)

How do you understand the difference between heroic courage and ordinary courage? (p. 12)



Brené writes, “ordinary courage is about putting our vulnerability on the line.” Can you think of a time when you practiced ordinary courage? How did it feel? (p. 13)

...courage has a ripple effect. Every time we choose courage, we make everyone around us a little better and the world a little braver. And our world could stand to be a little kinder and braver. (p. 15)

Can you think of a time when you experienced the ripple effect of courage? What happened? How were you affected? (p. 15)

From gangs to gossiping, we’ll do what it takes to fit in if we believe it will meet our need for belonging. But it doesn’t. We can only belong when we offer our most authentic selves and when we’re embraced for who we are. (p. 27)

Can you think of an example of a time when an effort to fit in has impeded your need to belong? What was the result? (p. 27)

How do the places you “fit in” differ from the places you “belong?” How does each group make you feel? (p. 27)



Brené differentiates between “how-to” and “the things that get in the way.” Can you think of an example of a time when you knew “how-to” but were unable because of “the things that get in the way?” (pp. 36-37)

How would you answer these questions Brené poses in “The Things that Get in the Way?” (p. 47)

Who do you become when you’re backed into that shame corner?

How do you protect yourself?

Who do you call to work through the mean-nasties or the cry-n-hides or the people-pleasing?

What’s the most courageous thing you could do for yourself when you feel small and hurt?

The thing is...authenticity isn’t always the safe option. Sometimes choosing being real over being liked is all about playing it unsafe. It means stepping out of our comfort zone.

Whom can you depend on to support you when you step out of your comfort zone?



Thankfully, compassion also spreads quickly. When we're kind to ourselves, we create a reservoir of compassion that we can extend to others. (p. 52)

Can you think of a time when you extended compassion or had compassion extended to you? How did you feel about yourself at that moment? (p. 52)

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. (p. 64)

How do you define the difference between spirituality and religion? (p. 64)

How has your spirituality contributed to your resilience? (p. 64)

In regards to practicing critical awareness, Brené writes that we need to be able to ask and answer these questions:

Is what I'm seeing real? Do these images convey real life or fantasy?



Do these images reflect healthy, Wholehearted living, or do they turn my life, my body, my family and my relationships into objects and commodities?

Who benefits by my seeing these images and feeling bad about myself?

How does answering these questions affect your reaction to these images? (p. 68)

How would you answer these questions Brené poses about numbing and taking the edge off? (p. 72)
(Circle yes or no.)

yes/no Does your _____ (eating, drinking, spending, gambling, saving the world, incessant gossiping, perfectionism, sixty-hour workweek) get in the way of your authenticity?

yes/no Does it stop you from being emotionally honest and setting boundaries and feeling like you're enough?

yes/no Does it keep you from staying out of judgment and from feeling connected?

yes/no Are you using _____ to hide or escape form the reality of your life?

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. (p. 90)

How do you interpret the relationship between faith, reason and certainty? (p. 90)

The comparison mandate becomes this crushing paradox of “fit in and stand out!” It’s not “cultivate self-acceptance, belonging and authenticity”; it’s “be just like everyone else, but better.” (p. 95)

In talking about the role of play in Wholehearted living, Brené shared about her initial inability to name the concept because she was so “personally removed.”

Are there any concepts in *The Gifts of Imperfection* that you had a difficult time understanding because you were also personally removed from those concepts? (p. 99)

We use our spare time to desperately search for joy and meaning in our lives. We think accomplishments and acquisitions will bring joy and meaning, but that pursuit could be the very thing that’s keeping us so tired and afraid to slow down. (pp. 101-102)

In our increasingly complicated and anxious world, we need more time to do less and be less. (p. 109)

What form of still and quiet works best for you? (p. 110)

When we value being cool and in control over granting ourselves the freedom to unleash the passionate, goofy, heartfelt and soulful expression of who we are, we betray ourselves. When we consistently betray ourselves, we can expect to do the same to the people we love. (p. 123)

If we believe that laughter, song and dance are essential to our soul-care, how do we make sure that we hold space for them in our lives? (p. 123)

Below is a collection of quotes that are great conversation starters for book clubs and book discussions.

Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do.

Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy – the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light. (p. 6)

The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become. (p. 17)

I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship. (p. 19)

A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all women, men and children. (p. 26)