



Companion Worksheet

MEANINGFUL WORK WORKSHEET

Brené Brown, Ph.D., LMSW

Brené gives examples of “unraveling journeys,” including working in a soul-sucking job and retiring.

Did you experience an unraveling during these experiences in your life? How did you work through them? (p. xiii)

Brené writes, “Compassionate people are boundaried people.”

When you think of the most compassionate people you work for or with, is this statement true? Do you feel that you are a boundaried person in the workplace? (p. 16)

Brené writes, “This research has taught me that if we really want to practice compassion, we have to start by setting boundaries and holding people accountable for their behavior.”

How do you feel this statement applies to the workplace? (p. 17)

What would your work life look like if you blamed less but had more respect for boundaries? (p. 17)

Setting boundaries and holding people accountable is a lot more work than shaming and blaming. (p. 18)

Brené shares about an interaction with a project manager who was worried that he shamed his team members. When questioned about how he held the employees accountable for not following protocol, he responded that it would be a “big hassle.”

Can you think of a time when you avoided the “hassle” of holding a coworker accountable by using shame and blame? What became of the situation? (pp. 17-18)

Can you think of a time when you held someone accountable for their behavior? What became of the situation? (pp. 17-18)



Brené writes that, “We also need to consider letting go of the myth of self-sufficiency.”

What do you think that would look like in the workplace? Would it be viable? (p. 20)

As we struggle to be authentic and brave, it’s important to remember that cruelty always hurts, even if the criticism is untrue. When we go against the grain and put ourselves and our work out in the world, some people will feel threatened, and they will go after what hurts the most – our appearance, our lovability, and even our parenting. (p. 53)

How have you been hurt by putting your work out in the world? How did you react to the criticism? (p. 53)

Brené clarifies that perfectionism is not the same thing as striving to be your best, and perfectionism is not self-improvement.

Do you feel that you seek perfectionism in your work or a striving to be your best and self-improvement? How do you understand the difference? (p. 56)



How has perfectionism impeded your work? For example, have you not pursued a career dream for fear of failing? (p. 57)

Perfectionism never happens in a vacuum. It touches everyone around us... we infect our workplace with impossible expectations... (p. 61)

Has perfectionism ever infected your workplace? What does that look like? (p. 61)

So hope is a combination of setting goals, having the tenacity and perseverance to pursue them, and believing in our own abilities. (p. 66)

What is your hope for your work and career? (p. 66)



Tolerance for disappointment, determination, and a belief in self are the heart of hope. (p. 66)

Brené shares Lynne Twists' comments on scarcity.

How has a feeling of scarcity affected your work experience? (p. 83)

What role do you believe scarcity plays in the workplace? (p. 83)

In my research, I found that what silences our intuitive voice is our need for certainty. Most of us are not very good at not knowing. We like sure things and guarantees so much that we don't pay attention to the outcomes of our brain's matching process. (p. 88)

How has your intuition helped you in the workplace? (p. 88)

How has the need for certainty hampered you in the workplace? (p. 88)

“The only unique contribution that we will ever make in this world will be born of our creativity.”

Brené talks about “owning and celebrating my existing creativity.”

What existing creativity can you own and celebrate in your work? (p. 96)

Brené quotes Brown’s research on play, “Respecting our biologically programmed need for play can transform work. It can bring back excitement and newness to our job...Most important, true play that comes from our own inner needs and desires is the only path to finding lasting joy and satisfaction in our work. In the long run, work does not work without play.” (p. 101)

Have you experienced the positive impact of play on your work? (p. 101)

What do you think it would look like to integrate play into your professional life? (p. 101)

Do we want to infect people with more anxiety or heal ourselves and the people around us with calm? (p. 107)



Brené writes about the following aspects of meaningful work that emerged from the research:

- We all have gifts and talents.
- Squandering our gifts brings distress to our lives.
- 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 a tremendous amount of commitment.
- Like our gifts and talents, meaning is unique to each of us.

What is your meaningful work? Does it align with your gainful employment? (p. 112)

Brené poses the following questions to overcome self-doubt and “supposed-to”. (p. 113)

What makes you afraid?

What’s on your “supposed-to” list?

Who says?

Why?



Brené shares about the difficulty in answering the question “What do you do?” with a succinct one word response.

Using the slash model of Marci Alboher, how would you currently define yourself? (Use as many slashes as you need.) (p. 114)

Brené poses the following questions: (p. 116)

What’s your ideal slash?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

What brings meaning to you?

