Dare to Lead - by Brené Brown

Synopsis by : M. Ridwan Zalbina

Synopsis

"Leadership is not about titles, status, and wielding power. A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for recognizing the potential in people and ideas and has the courage to develop that potential.

When we dare to lead, we don't pretend to have the right answers; we stay curious and ask the right questions. We don't see power as finite and hoard it; we know that power becomes infinite when we share it with others. We don't avoid difficult conversations and situations; we lean into vulnerability when it's necessary to do good work.

But daring leadership in a culture that's defined by scarcity, fear, and uncertainty requires skill-building around traits that are deeply and uniquely human. The irony is that we're choosing not to invest in developing the hearts and minds of leaders at the exact same time as we're scrambling to figure out what we have to offer that machines and AI can't do better and faster. What can we do better? Empathy, connection, and courage, to start.

Brené Brown has spent the past two decades studying the emotions and experiences that give meaning to our lives, and the past seven years working with transformative leaders and teams spanning the globe. She found that leaders in organizations ranging from small entrepreneurial startups and family-owned businesses to nonprofits, civic organizations, and Fortune 50 companies all ask the same question:

How do you cultivate braver, more daring leaders, and how do you embed the value of courage in your culture? " - Audible

Part One: Rumbling with Vulnerability

SECTION ONE: THE MOMENT AND THE MYTHS

- **Vulnerability** is not winning or losing. It's *having the courage to show up when you can't control the outcome*
- Cheap seat feedback is given from people who don't get into the ring and practice vulnerability but will give cheap feedback anyway
  - **To love is to be vulnerable**
- The 6 myths of vulnerability
  - Myth #1: vulnerability is weakness
  - Myth #2: I don't do vulnerability
  - Myth #3: I can go it alone
    - We are hardwired for connection. From our mirror neurons to language, we are a social species. In the absence of authentic connection, we suffer

- - - We derive strengths from our collective ability to plan, communicate, and work together
    - Myth #4: you can engineer the uncertainty and discomfort out of vulnerability
    - Myth #5: trust comes before vulnerability
      - Trust is a slow building, iterative, and layered process that happens overtime
      - Trust is earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection
      - 4 horsemen of the apocalypse of a failing marriage:
        1. criticism
        2. defensiveness
        3. stonewalling
        4. contempt
    - Myth #6: vulnerability is disclosure

SECTION 2: THE CALL TO COURAGE

- Being clear with people is kind, being unclear as unkind

> "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek"
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- **Stockdale lesson**: you must never confuse *faith* that you will prevail in the end which you can never afford to lose with the *discipline to confront* the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be
  - They call this learning gritty faith and gritty facts
  - They are big believers in "*what's my part?*"
- When we're lonely, we feel lethargic
- In sanitizing our language, in the context of military leadership training, we've decreased our comfort with expressing those feelings and holding that same space for others
- 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
- Other peoples emotions are not our jobs
  - ***We can't both serve people and try to control their feelings***

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Introduction: Brave Leaders and Courage Cultures

- A **leader** is anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential
- 10 behaviors and cultural issues that leaders identify as getting in our way in organizations across the world
    1. We avoid tough conversations including giving honest productive feedback
        - They attribute this to lack of courage, skill, and social norms of wanting to be polite
    2. We spend an unreasonable amount of time managing problematic behaviors
    3. Diminishing trust caused by a lack of connection and empathy
    4. Not enough people are taking smart risks or creating or sharing bold ideas to meet the changing demands and the appetite for innovation
    5. We get stuck and defined by setbacks, disappointments and failures. We spend too much time reassuring team members of their contribution and value
    6. Too much shame and blame, not enough accountability and learning
    7. People are opting out of vital conversations about diversity and inclusivity because they fear looking wrong, saying something wrong, or being wrong. Choosing comfort over difficult conversations is the epitome of privilege. It corrodes trust and moves away from meaningful change
    8. Individuals and teams rushing to ineffective or unsustainable solutions when things go wrong rather than doing a root cause analysis
    9. Organizational values are assessed on aspirations rather than actual behaviors
    10. Perfectionism and fear are preventing people from learning and growing
- The heart of daring leadership:

1. You can't get to courage without rumbling through vulnerability.

   Embrace the suck

   - Courage and fear are not mutually exclusive. We can feel both at the same time
   - 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 be fearless and vulnerable, and to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard
   - Courage is a collection of 4 skill sets than can be taught, observed, and measured
     1. Rumbling with vulnerability
     2. Living into our values
     3. Braving trust
     4. Learning to rise
        - **Our ability to be daring leaders will never be greater than our capacity for vulnerability**
2. Self awareness and self-love matter; who we are is how we lead
   - The true underlying obstacle to brave leadership is *how we respond to our fear*
   - The real barrier to daring leadership is our armor we use to protect ourselves when we aren't willing and able to rumble with vulnerability
3. Courage is contagious
   - It's important to create a culture that makes people feel safe, seen, heard, and respected
   - Daring leaders must care for and be connected to the people they lead

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SECTION 3: THE ARMORY

- Protecting our ego and fitting in is when we reach for armor in situations where we feel being liked or respected is at risk because we may be wrong or not have all the answers or not look smart enough
- Perfectionism is more about perception than internal motivation
  - And there's no way to control perception
- **Joy** is the most vulnerable emotion we feel
- Vulnerability, resentment, and anxiety as biggest drivers of numbing
  - **Resentment** is almost always related to a lack of boundaries
- As a leader, reward clarity, kindness, and real conversation. And teach hope instead
- The very best example of vulnerability is *saying I love you first*

SECTION 4: SHAME AND EMPATHY

- Shame 101:
  1. We all have it, shame is universal and one of the primitive human emotions we experience
  2. We are all afraid to talk about shame
  3. The less we talk about shame, the more control he has over our lives
     - Shame resilience

       is the ability to practice authenticity when we experience shame
       - To move through the experience without sacrificing our values
     - To come out on the other side of the shame experience with more courage, compassion, connection then we had going into it
       - It's about moving from shame to empathy
- Empathy is infinite and renewable
  - The more you give, the more you have
  - There's no reason to rank and ration or use comparative suffering
- In those bad moments when others are in pain, it is not our job to make things better
  - Our job is to connect and to take the perspective of someone else
  - Empathy is not connecting to an experience, it's *connecting to the emotions that underpin an experience*
- Empathy skill #1: To see the world as others see it, or perspective taking
  - It's only when diverse perspectives are included, respected, and valued that we can start getting a full picture of the world, who is serve, what they need, and how to successfully meet people where they are
- Empathy skill #2 : to be non-judgmental
  - We judge in areas where *we are most susceptible to shame*, and we judge people who are doing worse than we're doing in those areas
- *Empathy skill #3*: to understand another person's feelings
- Empathy skill #4 : to communicate your understanding of that person's feelings
  - **Emotional literacy** is also a prerequisite for empathy, shame resilience, and the ability to reset and rise after a fall
- Empathy skill #5 : mindfulness
  - Empathy is about *trying to connect and paying attention*
  - Empathy is feeling with people, sympathy is feeling for them
  - Empathy fuels connection, sympathy drives disconnection
    - The most important words you can hear from someone when you're in struggle or say to someone are "*Me too. You're not alone*"
  - Don't try to compare and shift the focus to the other person
- Four elements of shame resilience:
  1. Recognizing shame and understanding it's triggers

2. Practicing critical awareness

3. Reaching out

4. Speaking shame

    - Shame derives its power from being unspeakable, that's why it loves perfectionists

Part Two: Living Into Our Values

- **Integrity** is choosing courage over comfort
  - Choosing what's right over what's fun, fast, or easy
  - It's practicing our values, not just processing them
- Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things
  - Mastery requires *feedback*
- ***We don't fully see people until we know their values***

Part Three: Braving Trust

- *Trust between managers and employees* is the primary defining characteristic of the very best workplaces
  - Trust is the one thing that changes everything
    - It's not a nice to have, it's a must-have
    - Without it, every part of your organization can fall into disrepair
- The BRAVING Inventory is a rumble tool
  - B = *Boundaries* – Respect others' boundaries and willingness to ask
  - R = *Reliability* – You do what you say you'll do
  - A = *Accountability* – You own your mistake, apologize, and make amends
  - V = *Vault* – Don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share
  - I = *Integrity* – Choose courage over comfort
  - N = *Non-Judgement* – We can talk about how we feel and ask for help without judgement
  - G = *Generosity* – Extend the most generous interpretation possible to the intentions, words, and actions of others
- Leaders say that asking for help builds trust
  - Asking for help is a power move and a sign of strength to fight off judgement when others raise their hands
  - It reflects a self-awareness that is an *essential element* in braving trust

> "I don't trust people who don't love themselves and tell me 'I love you'"
>
> Maya Angelou

Part Four: Learning to Rise

- **Ham Foldover Debacle**: You make yourself the center of something that has nothing to do with you out of your own fear or scarcity only to be reminded that you're not the axis on which the world turns

- The three-step process to learning to rise:
    - The reckoning
    - The rumble
    - The revolution

- Slow down, take a deep breath, and get curious about what's happening

- Emotions are called feelings because we physically feel them in our bodies
    - This is how our bodies are connected to our mind
    - Risers are more emotionally connected to their bodies and pay attention to them

- Pain is hard. It is easier to be pissed off or angry than to acknowledge hurt
    - In this case our ego does the dirty work
        - It denies emotion and hates curiosity

- We don't trust people who don't struggle, who don't have bad days or hard times
    - We don't find connection with people we don't find relatable

- **Tactical breathing**: Inhale deeply through your nose, expand in your stomach for a count of four. Hold in that breath for a count of four, slowly exhale all the air through your mouth contract in your stomach for a count of four. Then hold the empty breath for a count of four

- *Practicing calm* is one of the most underrated leadership superpowers
    - **Calm** is creating perspective and mindfulness while managing emotional reactivity

- 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
    - In struggle, our brain comes up with a story to explain what's going on and gives our brain information on how best to self protect
    - The part of the brain that goes into protection mode likes binaries
        - Good guy, bad guy, dangerous, safe, ally, enemy
        - Because we are compelled to make stories, we are often compelled to *take incomplete stories and run with them*

- Confabulation is a lie told honestly
    - It's to replace missing information with something false that we believe to be true

- An SFD is a stormy(shitty) first draft of the mental story you're telling yourself that can be emotional and inaccurate
    - But it's meant to be getting out of the way and worked on later

- It's so much more honest, vulnerable, and disarming to state your proclamation is just conjecture that you want to get clarity on

- **Courage is rebellion**
    - Choosing authenticity and worthiness is an act of resistance in today's world
    - Choosing to live and love with our whole hearts is an act of defiance

- Three main things she's learned from all her research:

1. The *level of collective courage* in an organization is the absolute best predictor of the organizations ability to be successful in terms of its culture, to develop leaders, and to meet its mission

2. The greatest challenge in developing brave leaders is helping them acknowledge and answer their personal call to courage
   - Courage can be learned if we are willing to *put down the armor* and pick up shared language, tools and skills that we need for rumbling with vulnerability, living into our values, braving trust, and learning to rise

3. We fail the minute we *let someone else define success* for us