

WELLNESS INVENTORY

Brené Brown

PhD Social Work

TED Talk on Shame and Vulnerability, June 2010

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4Qm9cGRub0>

Notes by Barbara Hellman (many thanks)

Connection:

- Gives purpose and meaning to our lives, we are wired neurobiologically for connection

Brown's experience as social worker:

- When you ask people about love, they tell you about heartbreak
- When you ask people about belonging, they will tell you about excruciating experiences of exclusion
- When you ask people about connection, they will tell you about disconnection

Very quickly into her PhD research, ran into an unnamed "thing" that unraveled connection in a way that she did not understand. So, she pulled back out of the research to try to figure out what this thing was and she found it to be shame.

Shame

- Can be understood as the fear of disconnection, e.g. is there something about it if other people know it or see it will make me unworthy of connection?
- Shame is universal;
- People who don't experience shame have no capacity for empathy or human connection;
- No one wants to talk about it and the more you don't want to talk about it the more you have it;
- The "I'm not good enough, I'm not thin enough, I'm not ____ enough;
- What underpins shame is excruciating vulnerability. And, in order for connection to happen, we have to allow ourselves to be seen.

What she learned:

What separated the people with a strong sense of connection/love and belonging and those who struggle with connection/love and belonging is that those who had strong sense of love and belonging believed they were WORTHY of it.

Worthiness:

Studied all interviews of those who felt they were worthy of connection and found the following shared characteristics:

- Courage from Latin meaning heart - these people had to courage to tell the whole story, to be imperfect;
- Compassion to be kind to themselves first and then to others – we can't practice compassion with others unless we treat ourselves kindly;
- Connection – resulted from authenticity and a willingness to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they were;
- Vulnerability – they fully embraced vulnerability. They believed that what made them vulnerable made them beautiful. They did not talk about vulnerability being comfortable or excruciating as in shame interviews, but they considered vulnerability necessary, the willingness to say I love you first, to do something where there are no guarantees, to breathe through waiting for the doctor to call after a mammogram, to invest in a relationship that may or may not work out. They considered vulnerability fundamental, whereas Brown considered vulnerability a betrayal given her commitment to research (which is defined as the study of phenomenon for the explicit purpose of controlling and predicting). And, her mission to control and predicted yielded the answer that the way to live is with vulnerability and to stop controlling and predicting. This led to a breakdown/and spiritual awakening and therapy.

Vulnerability

- Core of shame and fear and struggle with unworthiness and also:
- Birthplace of joy, creativity, belonging and love.
- Brown did not want to delve into past, childhood or family, desired only strategies. Personally slugged it out for a year then went back into the research and learned the following about vulnerability:
 - We **numb** vulnerability with huge costs. Evidence is that we are the most the most in-debt, obese, addicted and medicated adult cohort in US history
 - The problem is that we cannot selectively numb emotion. We cannot numb the hard, difficult and uncomfortable feelings without numbing joy, gratitude, happiness so we become miserable, search for meaning, feel meaning, then numb with a couple of beers and a banana nut muffin to generate cycle.
 - Why and how we numb
 - Addiction
 - Make everything uncertain certain
 - Blame = a way to discharge pain and discomfort

- Perfect (as verb) ourselves (including put fat from our butt and put into our cheek) and our children (who are imperfect and wired for struggle but are worthy of love and belonging)
- Pretend that what we do doesn't have an impact on people (in our personal lives and in business as evidenced by oil spill, bailout, recall)

Solution:

- Let ourselves be seen, deeply seen, vulnerably seen;
- Love with our whole heart even though there are no guarantees;
- Practice gratitude and joy especially during moments of fear;
- Believe that we are enough so that we become kinder to ourselves and those around us

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Her Ordinary Courage Blog: <http://www.ordinarycourage.com/>