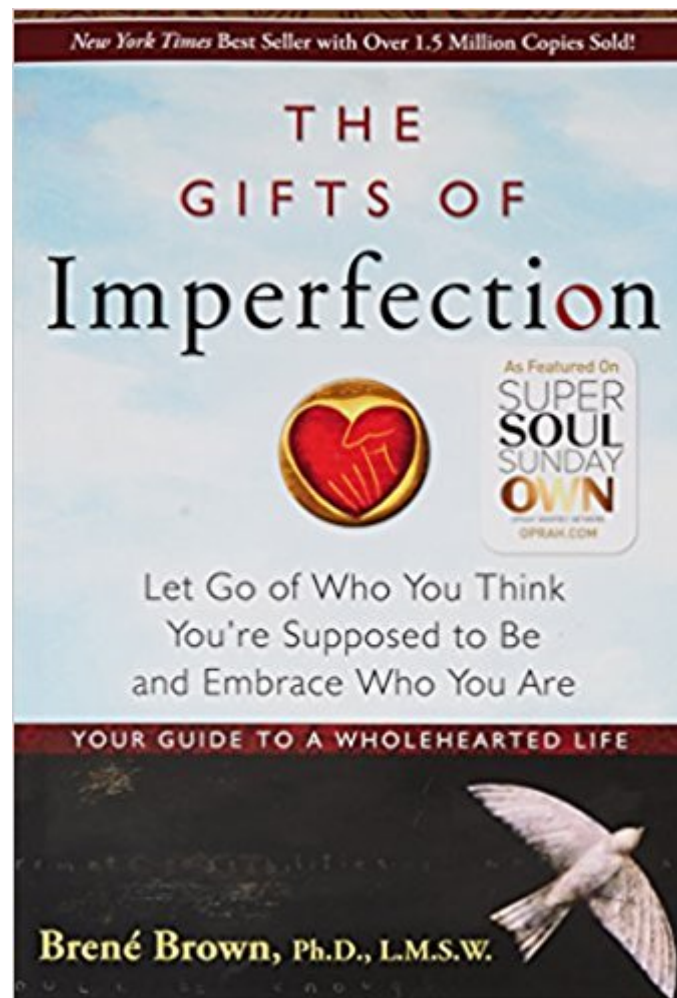




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The Gifts Of Imperfection: Let Go Of Who You Think You're Supposed To Be And Embrace Who You Are



Synopsis

In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brené Brown, a leading expert on shame, authenticity, and belonging, shares ten guideposts on the power of Wholehearted living – a way of engaging with the world from a place of worthiness. Each day we face a barrage of images and messages from society and the media telling us who, what, and how we should be. We are led to believe that if we could only look perfect and lead perfect lives, we'd no longer feel inadequate. So most of us perform, please, and perfect, all the while thinking, "What if I can't keep all of these balls in the air? Why isn't everyone else working harder and living up to my expectations? What will people think if I fail or give up? When can I stop proving myself?" In her ten guideposts, Brown engages our minds, hearts, and spirits as she explores how we can cultivate the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, "No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough," and to go to bed at night thinking, "Yes, I am sometimes afraid, but I am also brave. And, yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable, but that doesn't change the truth that I am worthy of love and belonging." "This important book is about the lifelong journey from 'What will people think?' to 'I am enough.' Brown's unique ability to blend original research with honest storytelling makes reading *The Gifts of Imperfection* like having a long, uplifting conversation with a very wise friend who offers compassion, wisdom, and great advice." – Harriet Lerner, New York Times best-selling author of *The Dance of Anger* and *The Dance of Connection* "Brené Brown courageously tackles the dark emotions that get in the way of leading a fuller life; read this book and let some of that courage rub off on you." – Daniel H. Pink, New York Times best-selling author of *A Whole New Mind* "Courage, compassion, and connection: Through Brené's research, observations, and guidance, these three little words can open the door to amazing change in your life." – Ali Edwards, author of *Life Artist*

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Customer Reviews

Brown, author of *I Thought It Was Just Me (but it isn't)*, again urges us to expose and expel our insecurities in order to have the most fulfilling life possible. Her latest is a guidebook for pilgrims on the journey to wholehearted living, which she defines as containing courage, compassion, deliberate boundaries, and connection. She has defined 10 guideposts for personal introspection, which involve cultivating some positive quality, whether it be authenticity, self-compassion, or a resilient spirit, intuition, meaningful work, or laughter. Each guidepost is the focus of a chapter that contains illustrative stories, primarily from her own life; definitions, including the difference between shame and guilt; quotes from such diverse sources as Diane Ackerman and E.E. Cummings; and brief suggestions of activities that she pursues with the assumption that they might help her audience. Although these activities are highlighted in her introduction to the book, they are in short supply and the book functions more as a chatty meditation on the guideposts. Despite occasional moments of insight, this book's primary value may be in spurring thought and providing references to other authors that will provide further inspiration for those seeking a more meaningful life. (Oct.)

Human-behavior researcher and author of *I Thought It Was Just Me* (2007), Brown has made a career out of studying difficult emotions such as fear and shame. In this latest book, she emphasizes that above all other ingredients of living an emotionally healthy life is the importance of loving ourselves. In the grips of what she took to be a breakdown, or midlife crisis, Brown came to understand she was experiencing a "spiritual awakening" and worked to explore its significance and the interaction of knowing and understanding yourself and loving yourself. She intersperses her own personal journey with research and clinical observations of others of the work of living a "wholehearted" life, or "engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness." The point is to embrace life and oneself with all the imperfections, releasing the stress of overdoing and overworking. Brown offers exercises for readers to plumb their own emotions and begin to develop the kind of resilience needed to stand up to unrealistic expectations of others and ourselves. --Vanessa Bush

Let me begin by stating where I was coming from, when I picked this book up. I've spent 11 years in the Army and done quite a few combat deployments. Moreover, I had recently been dumped in my

'perfect' engagement by my fiancée who had been cheating on me with a male coworker. So, this 'emotional' genre of reading isn't usually my thing and my sense of worthiness was very injured. I initially avoided this book out of concern that it was one of many under-evidenced self-help titles. Changing my mind on reading this was undoubtedly one of the best decisions I have ever made and I am a much better person for it. I don't guarantee very much, due to my skeptical nature; but, I think I can guarantee that something in this book will profoundly change you. Perhaps this was done by Dr. Brown's approach of confronting the 'things that stand in our way' of leading a 'wholehearted life'. This is important because thoughtful people need to confront these things in order to overcome them and develop not just a positive mindset; but, a *realistic* one that doesn't ignore the potentially negative cognitions that arise. Some of my PROs and CONs follow. But, allow me to be clear: if you have just been dumped, divorced, or experienced a break-up, then I think this is a great book for you. Some other titles like to do half-baked analysis of what happened between you two. Some of those books are like your own, highly-biased pep talker ("she was all wrong for you", "you're better off, now", etc.). While well-meaning, this can weaken you going forward. They sacrifice truth and accuracy for 'feel-good' support. Much has already been said about this book, so I've avoided a super thorough review. PROs-well-organized content. topics overlap somewhat (of course), but they are introduced in the form of very manageable daily 'guideposts'. -content is qualitative research-based. I think this is the right approach, since qualitative research is well-suited to derive meaning from the experiences of people. -writing style is down-to-earth, clear, and very humorous at times. -the book is relatively inexpensive. -the approach of tackling 'obstacles' of thinking that prevent wholehearted living. -realistic expectations of the results of reading this book. -comprehensive treatment of the elements of wholehearted living. -the persuasiveness of pretty much every guidepost. CONs-for the uninitiated (read: myself), I thought that guidepost 8 wasn't as clear in defining the concept of stillness. -umm.. I'll have to get back to you on this one. I would like to conclude with a few things that convince me that something in this book has made profound changes. First, I grew-up with a very domineering father and reading this book has made me truly comfortable with him for the first time in my life. Second, I NEVER danced at a bar without having some 'liquid courage' to prime me. After reading, I danced several songs (badly, of course ;-)) and truly enjoyed myself. Third, because of my balding, etc. I always felt a little too self-conscious to dare flirting with some very beautiful ladies that I've met. Not any more. These are just a few thoughts, but I hope that they speak to someone out there.

I've been through 6 therapists, I've struggled with depression for nearly twenty years, never could

finish anything I started, and everyone always assumed I had ADHD. Not until therapist number five did someone point out to me that ADHD is often mistaken for anxiety and he was sure that was my problem. Boy was he right. Sadly, he was terrible at treating, so I found a new therapist who encouraged me to embrace the bad days and bad times and she pointed me to Brene Brown's TED talk on vulnerability. It really spoke to me, so I thought it would be a good idea to read her book. I just looked at the screen for a full minute trying to figure out how to put into words how much this book has helped me and I just can't find them. All those years I thought I had ADHD, I was just afraid of what people would think. I would pick up a new hobby hoping it would be the one that I could stick with and foster, only to give up on it. Never was the problem an attention deficiency, it was a courage deficiency. The author talks a lot about how making a major change in your life isn't something you wake up and do one day, it's something you practice every single day. And most will struggle with it, but without the struggle, we lose out on so much. I will have far fewer regrets on my deathbed having read this book. If you read these Ms. Brown, THANK YOU, from the bottom of my heart.

I read "Daring Greatly" about 6 months ago after watching Dr. Brown's TED talks and that book honest to goodness changed my life. I was excited to read this one, particularly because I found her discussion of perfectionism so helpful in Daring Greatly. I have to admit that as much as I still admire Brene Brown, I found this to be a watered down version of Daring Greatly and I kind of regret buying it (I don't regret READING it, but I do regret paying for it, and I don't feel that this improves my library). I found this was a little shallow and abstract, whereas Daring Greatly so eloquently and articulately put words to ideas we understand intuitively, and it really enhanced my emotional vocabulary. This book offered little in that respect. Some of it (shame vs guilt, for example) was redundant of Daring Greatly (and other texts for that matter) and her discussion of ideas like intuition, spirituality, and numbing were vague and unhelpful to me. She was mostly quoting other people's definitions and discussion of these topics, and while some the quotes were thought-provoking, I didn't feel that it really enlightened me. Her examples were also not as compelling in this text. It was mostly about her, and while some of the examples were useful and memorable, I came away feeling like she was painting a picture of her family rather than focusing on her research and data. Daring Greatly, on the other hand, was written in such an empathetic and compassionate way that I kept saying, "YES! That's me! She understands!" or "Wow! That's totally my brother-in-law!" It was like one light bulb after another going off. Reading Daring Greatly was so inspiring and healing. This book didn't have that same level of empathy and was missing that

universal quality, focusing instead on examples that were auto-biographical. Some other reviewers said this read like a blog, and I have to agree. By the end of this book I didn't feel UNDERSTOOD like I did after reading *Daring Greatly*. I honestly felt that as I read *Daring Greatly*, Brene Brown was like looking inside me and having a conversation with me, even though she doesn't even know me. After reading *The Gifts of Imperfection*, however, I felt that I understood more about her and less about myself. There was also something a little kitschy about this. She had a section after each chapter called DIG deep where she listed ways that she tries to employ these strategies, and she often said "Amen" at the end of some quotes. While cute, it lacked the maturity and empathy of *Daring Greatly*. She was also a little judgmental in this book (towards others and towards herself) and I could ironically see her striving for perfectionism (like in order to be perfect she needs to become "wholehearted," so she is actively working to employ these strategies rather than actually embodying them). It is almost like by the time she got to *Daring Greatly* she was fully reborn and had reached that full enlightenment, and she was still working on getting there in this text. Additionally, unlike *Daring Greatly*, this reads a little bit like a checklist (see comment above) of things you should do: 1. don't be a perfectionist 2. Get creative 3. Rest and play 4. But don't numb 5. Dance like no one is watching you 6. practice self-compassion 7. Have faith. By the end I felt like I was being told what to do to be happy, as if it was a formula. While some of the advice was certainly helpful, it wasn't inspiring in the same way *Daring Greatly* was. *Daring Greatly* got at the heart of one's emotions. It talked about courage, authenticity, compassion (true ideals) and it showed how there is extraordinary in the ordinary. *The Gifts of Imperfection* seemed to get sidetracked by specifics (dancing, jewelry making, her childhood house in New Orleans) and it never reached that universality that was so healing in *Daring Greatly*. Lastly, this book was highly referential. As I said earlier, she quotes a lot of other people to get at defining abstract terms. She also references the work of many other psychologists, researchers, etc. For example, Kristin Neff and Marci Alboher. It isn't that I didn't appreciate her references, but this felt blog-like again: "Hey I read this and I LOVED this idea, check it out!" Or "this quote inspires me! Let me share." In contrast, it felt like Brene Brown had found her own voice in *Daring Greatly*, and no longer needed to continually reference others' work and could just share her research and the conclusions she reached from it. All in all, while *The Gifts of Imperfection* was a nice book that offered a little refresher of Brown's understanding of "wholehearted living" with some ideas about intuition and faith, creativity, and song and dance, it was not as sophisticated or inspiring as her latest book *Daring Greatly*, which really felt like a true culmination of her research and experiences. I'd skip this one; or at least just borrow it from the library...

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