



LEADership Book Club
Food for Thought Discussion Questions
Dare to Lead: Brave work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.
By Brené Brown

These questions are not “homework” where you need to answer all of them. They are just some ideas taken from the book and can be a starting point for discussion.

1. Why do you think Brené titled the book, “Dare to Lead?” What idea or emotion comes to your mind when you hear the word “dare?”
2. The author’s definition of leadership is, “Anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes and who has the courage to develop that potential.” (Pg. 4) What strikes you about her definition?
3. Brené states that her research pointed broadly to the need for “braver leaders and more courageous cultures.” Based on your work experience and non-work groups you engage with, what would braver leaders and more courageous cultures look like to you?
4. The author maintains that courage is a skill that can be learned and has four components: 1) Rumbling with vulnerability as the foundation; 2) living into your values; 3) braving trust, and 4) learning to rise. Identify one or two main points from these sections of her book that you feel are particularly helpful for you.
5. Brené asserts that if we don’t “do vulnerability” (*the emotion we experience during times of uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure, requiring courage to show up when we don’t know the outcome*), then we will default to fear, which when it drives our thinking and behavior leads to acting out or shutting down emotionally. If you were to grow in “doing vulnerability,” what is one action you would take?
6. To be vulnerable we need trust; to trust, we need to be vulnerable. The author’s research pointed to trust being built in the small moments-paying attention, listening, gestures of genuine care and connection. Consider someone you trust and the reasons. Do you agree with this research?
7. Have you had an experience where you received or gave respectful, honest, and clear feedback? How did you feel about this encounter?
8. Healthy striving is self-focused: How can I improve? Perfectionism is other-focused: What will people think? How can we move from perfectionistic tendencies to healthy striving, and why is this important to work toward?

9. Shame is not the same as guilt. Guilt happens when you act against your values, giving you the feeling that you've *done* something bad...and prompts an apology or behavioral change. Shame, on the other hand, is the feeling that you *are* bad and usually doesn't reveal any sort of learning experience—instead of making changes, you believe that you're inherently a bad person, incapable of doing better. How does knowing this distinction between shame and guilt help you?
10. Going through the process of determining two core values is a worthy and challenging exercise. Values are who you are; Brené defines them as “a way of being or believing that we hold most important.” How close did you come to defining your two core values? Feel free to share them if you wish.
11. What do you believe is one core value for the City at which you work? What behaviors support that value?
12. What do you think about the assumption of positive intent? Do you believe that people are doing the best with what they've got?
13. “Trust is 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 literally, into disrepair.” (Pg. 223) The author states the importance of naming specific behaviors that build trust and does so with the BRAVING inventory. Did any of those trust-building behaviors stand out to you?
14. “Here's the bottom line. If we don't have the skills to get back up, we may not risk falling. And if we're brave enough often enough, we are definitely going to fall.” Do you feel that you give yourself and others permission to fall?
15. Learning to rise –getting back up from our falls, overcoming our mistakes, and facing our hurt in a way that brings more wisdom and wholeheartedness involves a process of reckoning, the rumble, and the revolution. How do you relate to that learning process?
16. Having a physiological response to feelings as a cue to be willing to feel the emotions and become curious about them may be a new idea. What might you do to try this?
17. In the absence of data, we will always make up stories. How can you use the idea of sharing the “shitty first draft” to grow and allow others to grow?
18. What is one small personal or professional growth step you would like to take as a result of reading, *Dare to Lead*?

Brené Brown's last sentence sends an inspiring invitation, “Choose courage over comfort. Choose whole hearts over armor. And choose the great adventure of being brave and afraid. At the exact same time.”