

Brené Brown, Ph.D., LMSW



About Brené

Dr. Brené Brown is a professor and vulnerability researcher at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. Because vulnerability is at the center of many thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, her research topics cover a broad range of emotions and experiences, including shame, courage, and authenticity. Brené writes,



“In our culture, vulnerability has become synonymous with weakness. We associate vulnerability with emotions like fear, shame, and scarcity; emotions that we don’t want to discuss, even when they profoundly affect every aspect of our lives.

To reduce our feelings of vulnerability, we wake up every morning, put on our game face, and rarely take it off - even at home. We use invulnerability as a shield to protect us from uncomfortable emotions and struggles with anxiety and self-doubt. But invulnerability has a price.

Vulnerability is indeed at the core of difficult emotions, but it is also the birthplace of authenticity, courage, joy, love, belonging, accountability, innovation, inspiration, creativity, and spirituality. When we avoid or shut down vulnerability, we lose access to the experiences that give purpose and meaning to our lives.

If we want to change the way we live, love, parent, teach, lead organizations, and build communities, we have to start with a conversation about vulnerability - this is where our story begins.”

Brené spent the first five years of her decade-long study focusing on shame and fear, and is now using that work to explore a concept that she calls Wholeheartedness. She poses the questions:

How do we learn to embrace our vulnerabilities and imperfections so that we can engage in our lives from a place of authenticity and worthiness? How do we cultivate the courage, compassion, and connection that we need to recognize that we are enough - that we are worthy of love, belonging, and joy?

Brené has won numerous teaching awards, including the College’s Outstanding Faculty Award. In 2008, she was named Behavioral Health Scholar-in-Residence at the Council on Alcohol and Drugs Houston. Brené’s work has been featured on PBS, NPR, and the Oprah and Friends Radio Network, and her articles have appeared in *Self* magazine, *Elle* magazine, and many national newspapers. She is also a frequent guest on radio shows across the US and she has given two TEDx talks on her vulnerability research. Most recently, *Houston Women Magazine* named her one of “The 50 Most Influential Women of 2009.”