

BOOK REVIEW

ON DARE TO LEAD - DR. BERNE BROWN

Author : Mrs. Shalini Acharya

The Book, 'Dare to Lead' has been penned by a four time New York Times best selling author, Dr. Berne Brown. Dr. Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston and has spent over two decades studying courage, vulnerability, empathy and shame. This book caters to the needs of those who are looking for a potent guide to inculcate leadership, who want to be brave and step up. In fact Dare to Lead is meant for those who want to cultivate brave and daring leadership. This book is the result of a seven year meticulous study carried out by the researcher academic, Dr. Berne Brown, on the future of leadership. She brings out the game changing finding that courage is an aggregation of four skill sets that can be imparted, observed and measured. Through this book, Dr. Brown shows the reader how to instil the ideas of daring, leadership, stepping up and brave wilderness. She has conducted the research with leaders, change makers and culture-shifters.



The Book, "Dare to Lead" is a sacred text for courage building at the workplace. Leaders and teams face solemn issues in showing up vulnerability at work. This book delves on the topic of handling ones fears, choosing courage over solace and building an organizational culture based on courage and vulnerability.

Dr. Berne Brown talks about the need for daring Leaders and what it take to be one, besides building a culture of courage for organizational progress. In fact this question is persistently asked throughout the book.

She addresses the question, "Who is a Leader?" and answers it by saying that a leader is one who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and the one who has the courage to cultivate and develop that potential. According to Berne, courage is a collection of four skill sets namely Rumbling with vulnerability, Living into our values, Braving Trust and Learning to rise. In fact Rumbling with Vulnerability is the heart of daring leadership. She opines that vulnerability is an emotion that people experience during times of uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. She says that the one who is brave enough more often, is frequently criticized. In fact, Berne encourages readers to face moments of vulnerability whole heartedly and without any protective armor.

Further, she speaks about the call to muster courage. According to the author's research, the only way forward is to invest adequate time attending to fears and remain openhearted. With respect to Armoury, she opines that a daring leader encourages healthy strife, empathy, understanding and empathy especially in times of failure. She reiterates that Leaders often feel inhibited to display vulnerability as once they remove their armor and expose themselves, they actually experience shame.



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Shame is a fear that results from what we have done or failed to do which renders us unworthy of connection. According to her, Shame is what all of us experience and is one of the most primitive emotions. Shame is also something that most people are cautious talking about. Ironically, the less one talks about it, the more it shows up in the form of gossip, harassment, discrimination, blame game and bullying. Shame happens between people and can be healed only through empathy. She imparts lessons on how to be resilient to shame; this can be done by recognizing shame and understanding the triggers, moving against being aggressive, practising critical awareness, reaching out and actually speaking shame.

She opines that daring leaders who live by their values are never silent about difficult or awkward things. Living in our values essentially includes practising those values. Moreover receiving feedback is of utmost importance. The receiver should be brave enough to listen, find something valuable, include what works and ignore the rest. She speaks about the importance of learning to rise. She says that if you own the story, you get to write the ending of the story, on the contrary, if you deny it, the story owns you.

Berne winds up with three essential extract from her study which are as follows:

1. The degree of collective courage is essentially the most effective predictor of courageous and daring leadership as well as success.
2. One of the ways to develop courageous leaders is by assisting them to acknowledge and answer their call to courage
3. We lose the game the moment we permit someone else to define our success.

In summation, the remarkable take aways from Berne's Born to Lead are as follows:

Vulnerability has been beautifully described as an emotion that we experience during times of risk, failure, uncertainty and emotional exposure.

Leaders often mask their vulnerability because they fear experiencing shame if they expose themselves.

Empathy is indeed the remedy to shame. Integrity involves choosing bravery over comfort.

The final take away was- Own the story and you get to pen the ending. If you are in denial, the story owns you.

Brown's research transcends and touches upon multiple fields as it aims at successful communication- both intrapersonal and interpersonal. She sums up by saying that it is important to know one self and enforce boundaries besides recognizing limitations. She signs off by saying that we are essentially people.

As a reader, personally Dare to Dream was a kind of unputdownable book that made for an interesting read. In fact, it can be aptly described as an absorbingly actionable handbook on creating a space for better work and more fulfilled people. It was analytical and well structured with concrete examples. If the readers are able to muster the courage to follow her research and implement it in the organizations, they will succeed in transforming their organizations into better ones.

Though in some ways, some of the content appeared to be repackaged from her earlier ideas, she issues a fresh call to inculcate bravery and foster courageous workplace cultures.