

## The Gifts of Imperfection

By Brene Brown

Wholehearted living, authenticity, vulnerability, shame, gratitude, joy, love and belonging. What do these things have to do with collaborative family law practice?

1. Wholehearted Living is about engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating 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.* It's going to bed at night thinking, *Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.*
2. Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are.

Choosing authenticity means:

- Cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable;
- Exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all made of strength and struggle; and
- Nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen when we believe that we are enough.

Authenticity demands Wholehearted Living and Loving-even when it's hard, even when we're wrestling with the shame and fear of not being good enough, and especially when the joy is so intense that we're afraid to let ourselves feel it.

Mindfully practicing authenticity during our most soul-searching struggles is how we invite grace, joy, and gratitude into our lives. It's hard to do if you have self-doubt and shame.

3. Shame is the intensely painful feeling we experience of feeling we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. Shame is the fear of disconnection, of not being worthy of connection.
4. Shame Resilience is the response to shame. Tell your story and reach out. It consists of 3 things:
  - Courage means speaking honestly and openly about who we are, what we're feeling and our experiences. Ordinary courage is about putting our vulnerability on the line.
  - Compassion means to "suffer with." It's not our ordinary response to suffering, which is more likely to protect ourselves or others by blaming and defensiveness.
  - Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship. We are wired for connection to thrive emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually.
5. Love and Belonging. Love is mirror image of shame, i.e., not flawed and worthy of connection. Belonging is not "fitting in"; it requires that we be who we are. Relationship and connection happen in an indefinable space between people which can never be fully known or understood. Love and belonging go together. Same holds true for joy and gratitude. A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. Practice love and belonging. Love is an action.

### How Do We Develop Wholehearted Living?

#### 10 Guideposts

1. Cultivating Authenticity: Letting go of What People Think
2. Cultivating Self-Compassion; Letting go of Perfectionism
3. Cultivating a Resilient Spirit; Letting go of Numbing and Powerlessness
4. Cultivating Gratitude and Joy: Letting go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark
5. Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith; Letting go of the Need for Certainty
6. Cultivating Creativity; Letting Go of Comparison

7. Cultivating Plan and Rest. Letting Go of Exhaustion as a Status Symbol and Productivity as Self-Worth
8. Cultivating Calm and Stillness; Letting Go of Anxiety as a Lifestyle
9. Cultivating Meaningful Work; Letting Go of Self- Doubt and “Supposed To”
10. Cultivating Laughter, Song and Dance; Letting Go of Being Cool and Always in Control

### How These Definitions and Guideposts Can Help in Collaborative Practice

1. Shame resilience and the need to connect. This is what teamwork provides.
  - The team or practice group is the place to be seen, heard and valued without judgment
  - It is the place to go when we feel vulnerable or shamed
  - It is the place we can share our vulnerabilities and process them
  - It’s a place of love and belonging
2. Authenticity calls for us to be honest and real. It helps us –
  - Be open to feedback
  - Find joy rather than fear about developing our practice
  - Model confidence, hope and calm with clients
  - Not to over-function, not to work harder than the clients
  - Deal with anxiety and model calm
3. Wholehearted Living makes us feel worthy of connection by
  - Being honest about how we are feeling and not numbing emotions
  - Developing critical awareness
  - Not taking the edge off vulnerability, pain and discomfort but working with it
  - Cultivating gratitude and joy
  - Letting go of scarcity by thinking sufficiency
  - Honoring intuition, that which is not seen, faith in process