

Note: The links in this PDF are safe, but it usually takes a few seconds for Acrobat to respond when you click on them.

It's not necessary to read it, but the discussion will be pulling ideas from Brene Brown's book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7015403-the-gifts-of-imperfection>

We will be discussing two of the ten guideposts to Wholehearted Living, which she defines as:

“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.*”

Here is the entire list, the two in bold are open for discussion:

Cultivating Authenticity: Letting Go of What People Think

Cultivating Self-Compassion: Letting Go of Perfectionism

Cultivating a Resilient Spirit: Letting Go of Numbing and Powerlessness

Cultivating Gratitude and Joy: Letting Go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark

Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith: Letting Go of the Need for Certainty

Cultivating Creativity: Letting Go of Comparison

Cultivating Play and Rest: Letting Go of Exhaustion as a Status Symbol and Productivity as Self-Worth

Cultivating Calm and Stillness: Letting Go of Anxiety as a Lifestyle

Cultivating Meaningful Work: Letting Go of Self-Doubt and “Supposed To”

Cultivating Laughter, Song, and Dance: Letting Go of Being Cool and “Always in Control”

See also Brene Brown's famous YouTube TEDx speech about vulnerability:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o>

Her followup TED speech about the relationship of vulnerability to shame:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psN1DORYYV0>

Cultivating Authenticity: Letting Go of What People Think

“Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.”

“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.”

DISCUSSION (Pick one or more questions or add you own):

How can authenticity, courage, compassion, shame, and connection shape the discourse between atheists, agnostics, skeptics, Christians, and Muslims?

How can you be authentic and compassionate when talking about matters of faith and no faith in God?

What does that look like?

Since minds are unlikely to be changed with regard to fundamental beliefs, would the discussion be more productive if it centered on outcomes rather than beliefs? For example, should we try to develop public policies that are belief-neutral so that each person can live their authentic life?

Cultivating Intuition and Trusting Faith: Letting Go of the Need for Certainty

“Intuition is not independent of any reasoning process. In fact, psychologists believe that intuition is a rapid-fire, unconscious associating process - like a mental puzzle. The brain makes an observation, scans its files, and matches the observation with existing memories, knowledge, and experiences. Once it puts together a series of matches, we get a "gut" on what we've observed. Sometimes our intuition or our gut tells us what we need to know; other times it actually steers us toward fact-finding and reasoning. As it turns out, intuition may be the quiet voice within, but that voice is not limited to one message. Sometimes our intuition whispers, "Follow your instincts." Other times it shouts, "You need to check this out; we don't have enough information!"

“Intuition is not a single way of knowing—it’s our ability to hold space for uncertainty and our willingness to trust the many ways we’ve developed knowledge and insight, including instinct, experience, faith, and reason.”

“Faith is a place of mystery, where we find the courage to believe in what we cannot see and the strength to let go of our fear of uncertainty.”

“I (Brown) also learned that it’s not always the scientists who struggle with faith and the religious who fully embrace uncertainty. Many forms of fundamentalism and extremism are about choosing certainty over faith. I love this from theologian Richard Rohr: “My scientist friends have come up with things like ‘principles of uncertainty’ and dark holes. They’re willing to live inside imagined hypotheses and theories. But many religious folks insist on answers that are always true. We love closure, resolution and clarity, while thinking that we are people of ‘faith’! How strange that the very word ‘faith’ has come to mean its exact opposite.”

“Faith is essential when we decide to live and love with our whole hearts in a world where most of us want assurances before we risk being vulnerable and getting hurt. To say, “I’m going to engage Wholeheartedly in my life” requires believing without seeing.”

“The opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty.” - Anne Lamott, *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*

In her discussions of the ten guideposts at <http://the-love-compass.com/category/wholehearted-living/> relationship advisor Erica Djossa says, “Faith is an absolutely essential part of living a wholehearted life and isn’t just for zealous spirituals who people perceive as lacking reason and/or logic. Not everything in our lives can be subject to certainty and often there are things that are beyond our control and foresight. Intuition and faith are the tools that can help us to cope and navigate our way through uncertain times in our lives.”

DISCUSSION (Pick one or more questions or add you own):

Can you have faith and not be religious?

What do you use to navigate through uncertainty?

Is reason the answer?

Is faith the answer?

If you say reason is the answer, then how do you account for emotional responses to uncertainty?

Should you disregard or suppress your emotions?

Should you embrace them?

What if your emotion is a sense of certainty?

Should you disregard or suppress that emotion?

Are religious people wrong for claiming certainty?

Is science the only realm of certainty?

Can we live existentially without certainty?

How can the embrace of uncertainty be used to help us acknowledge that we are all in the same tenuous situation, and therefore help us develop compassion for ourselves and each other?