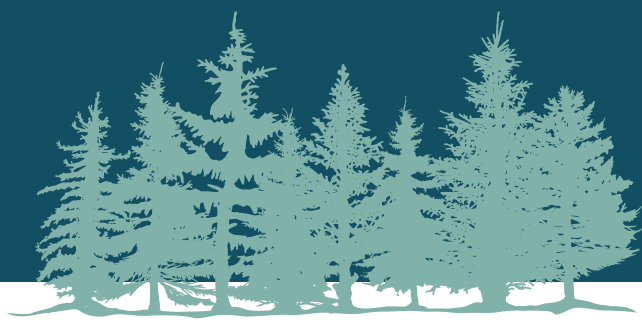


BRAVING THE WILDERNESS



BOOK DIGEST

HOLD HANDS. WITH STRANGERS.

“We’re in a spiritual crisis and the key to building a true belonging practice is maintaining our belief in inextricable human connection.”

It is paramount to realize that the spirit that flows between all of us CANNOT be broken; it is our belief in this connection that is constantly tested and often severed.

Brene Brown writes:

“When our belief that there’s something greater than us, something rooted in love and compassion, breaks, we are more likely to retreat to our bunkers, to hate from afar, to tolerate bullshit, to dehumanize others, and, ironically, to stay out of the wilderness.”

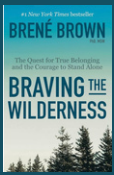
Our belief in this inextricable connection is our greatest source of courage in the wilderness. If we know that our connection to others and ourselves is indestructible, we’ll find the strength to stand up for ourselves no matter how much pushback we receive. However, she warns us that:

“When we don’t believe in an unbreakable connection, the isolation of the wilderness is too daunting so we stay in our factions and echo chambers.”

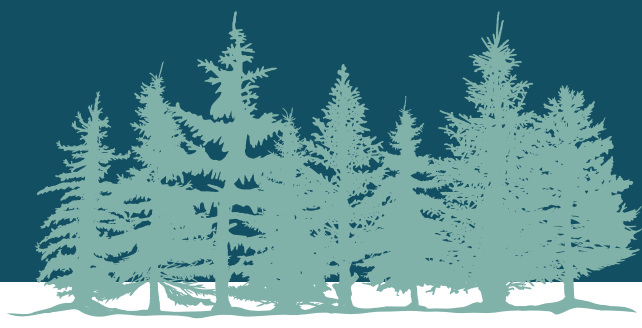
COVER IT ALL IN LEATHER

The author shares the lessons of the Indian Buddhist monk Shantideva that she learned through Pema Chödrön. He made a powerful analogy about our tendency to walk the world wishing everything and everyone could just be different so that we don’t ever feel triggered again. Indeed, we can either cover the entire world in leather so that our feet are protected from any kind of harm OR we can wear shoes and let the world be the way it is.

A lot of us acknowledge how much they love mankind! while feeling weary about people... Brene Brown urges us to attend in person collective moments of joy and pain to remember that our bond are far more greater and important than our differences.



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She shares four examples of her own life when all differences were erased when football fans from opposite teams sang an anthem together, when a song became a lifelong friend for her and her sisters after singing it together at a Garth Brooks concert, or when all the spectators raised their hands, in the theater where they were watching Dumbledore's friends celebrate his life by waving their wands to the sky, while Harry Potter was crying over his dead body. She also shares how Houstonians united when their NASA family faced incredible grief the night the Challenger exploded. Finally, she describes the gatherings she shared with her neighborhood friends at first and then with strangers in Church after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012.

She reminds us that:

“Being alone in the midst of a widely reported trauma, watching endless hours of twenty-four-hours news or reading countless articles on the internet, is the quickest way for anxiety and fear to tiptoe into your heart and plant their roots of secondary trauma.”

And she concludes that:

“Not enough of us know how to sit in pain with others. Worse, our discomfort shows up in ways that can hurt people and reinforce their own isolation. I have started to believe that crying with strangers in person could save the world.”

INEXTRICABLE CONNECTION

Collective moments of joy and pain are sacred experiences. She adds:

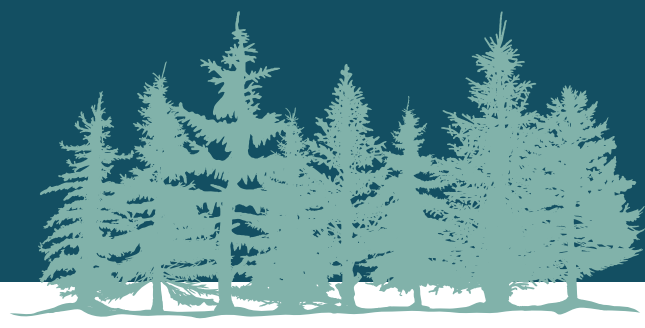
“They are so deeply human that they cut through our differences and tap into our hardwired nature.”

They allow us to remember what the human spirit can do. They show us that no matter how much we dislike someone, we are still inextricably connected as human beings.

However we tend to shy away from those experiences! Because they feel vulnerable and we underestimate how much we need them. We need to witness when joy and pain unites us beyond our differences, otherwise we can only acknowledge what happens when we use a gathering to confront our different beliefs and political opinions. We are wired for connection and we need real in person connection.



BRAVING THE WILDERNESS



BOOK DIGEST

HOLD HANDS. WITH STRANGERS.

A SENSATION OF SACREDNESS

French sociologist Emile Durkheim spoke of that “sense of sacredness” we feel when we are part of something bigger than us. The author also quotes researchers who said that our experiences of collective assembly allow for “a sense of meaning, increased positive affect, an increased sense of social connection and a decreased sense of loneliness—all essential components of a healthy, happy life.” Those are opportunities to feel joy, peace and meaning. They’ve always been part of the human experience and we’re now demonstrating their psychological benefits. Music is a major convener of those shared moments of joy and pain. That’s why it’s at the heart as so many ceremonies, celebrations protests and funerals.

A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

“Holiness is not about perfection or niceness; it is about belonging, that sense of being in the Presence and through the quality of true belonging, the wild magnetic of implicating others in the Presence...
—John O’Donohue”

In this section, she describes how funerals are the embodiment of the concept of collective pain and how our connection with others can help us heal ourselves and each other.

She writes:

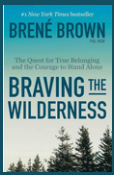
“Funerals matter. Showing up to them matters. And funerals matter not just to the people grieving, but to everyone who is there.”

After all we’re all equal in face of death, loss and grief.

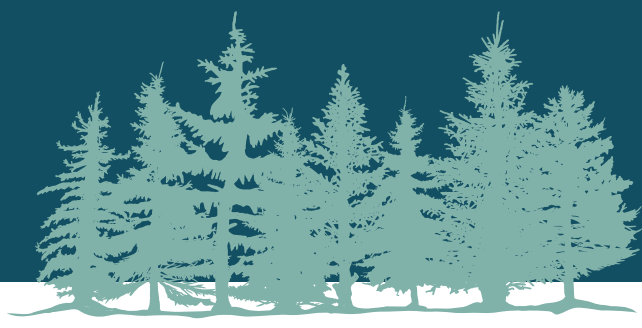
COMMON ENEMY INTIMACY

As Brene Brown reminds us, there is no faster way to connect with a stranger than to find someone to criticize together or to gossip over. And the worst part is that it feels extremely gratifying and really good in that moment. That’s why it’s so seductive (and addictive even). However, those are not real connections. They can’t be. She writes that:

“A connection built on snark has about as much value as snark itself—nada”.



BRAVING THE WILDERNESS



BOOK DIGEST

HOLD HANDS. WITH STRANGERS.

Through her research about shame, our author witnessed first hand how incredibly damaging gossip can be: she interviewed those who had experienced overhearing what was said about them and saw how deep the wounds were. That's when she decided to go on a gossip detox! And she was shocked at how some people she had thought of as close friends now appeared as strangers she did not share anything real with. Hanging out with those who hate the same people is not connection, it's a function of the "either with us or against us" trap. She calls it "common enemy intimacy".

"Common enemy intimacy is counterfeit connection and the opposite of true belonging."

It is a gratifying, pleasurable, often intense experience allowing us to discharge outrage and pain, not fuel for true connection! And that's why we so often feel intense regrets afterwards... She describes it as an "integrity hangover". And when we gravitate towards those circles, we also leave with the anxiety of being outcast the moment we don't say what we were supposed to say.

"There is no true belonging, only an unspoken treaty to hate the same people."

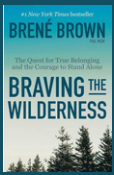
She writes:

"It is not true collective joy if it's at the expense of others, and it is not true collective pain if it causes others pain."

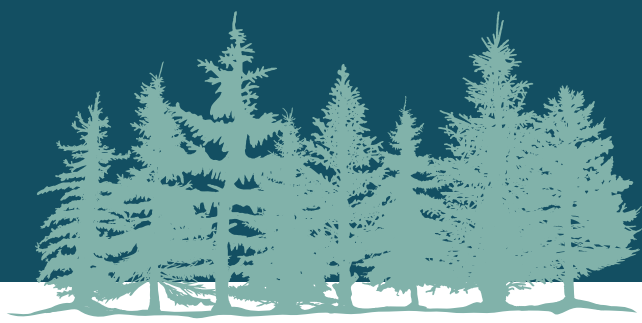
Brene Brown then walks us through her experience of the 2017 Women's March in Washington and how depending on where you looked you could experience true collective pain and joy OR divisiveness at its worse. She shares:

"Within a one-block walk we had visible proofs that extremists at both ends of political continuum have more in common with each other that they do with the vast majority of people from their own constituencies. What they share is leveraging any opportunity to discharge their denied and festering pain, hurt and feelings of smallness or powerlessness."

So a word of caution: We need moments of collective assembly to meet our primal needs for shared social experiences AND we must make sure that our yearnings are not exploded for any other purposes than authentic connection. Those moments can indeed heal our collective wounds AND they can initiate collective trauma within the same community.



BRAVING THE WILDERNESS



BOOK DIGEST

HOLD HANDS. WITH STRANGERS.

“When we come together to share authentic joy, hope, and pain, we melt the pervasive cynicism that often cloaks our better human nature. When we come together under the false flag of common enemy intimacy, we amplify cynicism and diminish our collective worth.”

GETTING SOCIAL

“I’ve come to the conclusion that the way we engage with social media is like fire—you can use them to keep yourself warm and nourished, or you can burn down the barn. It all depends on your intentions, expectations, and reality-checking skills.”

Face-to-face connection is essential to our sense of true belonging. We cannot bypass that fact. So social media are to be seen as a wonderful starting point where to meet those with whom we can then create real community, one based on structure, meaning, purpose and face-to-face contact.

“Social media are great for developing community, but for true belonging, real connection and real empathy require meeting real people in real space in real time.”

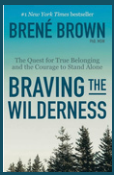
To illustrate this, she shares how she reconnected with her childhood best friend—and in so many ways first true love—thanks to Facebook! But that their true sense of connection was reignited by spending hours on the same sofa, catching up on everything that had hurt and awed them along the way.

COURAGE AND THE COLLECTIVE

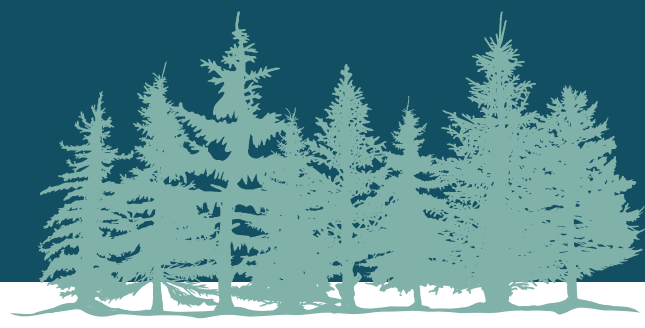
Brene Brown reminds us that:

“The foundation of courage is vulnerability—the ability to navigate uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.”

“No vulnerability, no courage.”



BRAVING THE WILDERNESS



BOOK DIGEST

HOLD HANDS. WITH STRANGERS.

And it takes courage both to experience joy and to stay with pain. Joy is probably the most vulnerable of the two. We're afraid that allowing it will invite disaster or disappointment in our homes. We go to the worst scenario to try to beat fate to the punch by expecting the other shoe to drop. She calls this "foreboding joy", and she offers us an antidote: gratitude.

And as it relates to pain, only by feeling it can we avoid spreading it as an escape mechanism.

We need the courage to feel both.

And to be brave we need to let ourselves be vulnerable. There's no escaping this fact and she urges us to reflect on how true it is using our own examples of courage.

"And as much as we value "going it alone"

and as much as we sometimes gather together for the wrong reasons.

in our hearts we want to believe

that despite our differences and despite the need to brave the wilderness.

we don't always have to walk alone."