



Foster Family Agency
"Our Children...
Our Communities...
Our Legacy..."

THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECT PARENTING BY BRENE BROWN

Please read the book or listen to the audio book and complete this worksheet.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1) How do you understand the differentiation between self-awareness and self-love?

I learned how to worry more about how I felt and less about "what people might think." I was setting new boundaries and began to let go of my need to please, perform and perfect. I started saying no rather than sure (and being resentful and pissed off later). I began to say "Oh, yes!" rather than "Sounds fun, but I have lots of work to do" or "I'll do that when I'm _____ (thinner, less busy, better prepared)."

2) When or with whom are you most likely to say "yes" when you mean "no"? Does that turn into resentment or blame? What would it take for you to practice "no"?

When we're looking for compassion, we need someone who is deeply rooted, able to bend, and, most of all, we need someone who embraces us for our strengths and struggles. We need to honor our struggle by sharing it with someone who has earned the right to hear it. When we're looking for compassion, it's about connecting with the right person at the right time about the right issue.

3) Whom do you reach out to for genuine compassion? Who reaches out to you for genuine compassion?

The comparison mandate becomes this crushing paradox of "fit in and stand out!" It's not "cultivate self-acceptance, belonging and authenticity"; it's "be just like everyone else, but better".

4) In talking about the role of play in wholehearted living, Brené shared about her initial inability to name the concept because she was so "personally removed." Are there any concepts in the book that you had a difficult time understanding because you were also personally removed from those concepts?

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Recognizing Shame

The first element of shame resilience is recognizing shame and understanding our triggers. Men and women who are resilient to shame have this capacity. This enables them to respond to shame with awareness and understanding.

When we can't recognize shame and understand our triggers, shame blindsides us. It washes over us, and we want to slink away and hide.

In contrast, if we recognize our shame triggers, we can make mindful, thoughtful decisions about how we're going to respond to shame—before we do something that might make things worse.

Shame has physical symptoms. These might include your mouth getting dry, time seeming to slow down, your heart racing, twitching, looking down and tunnel vision. These symptoms are different from one person to the next. So if you learn your physical symptoms, you can recognize shame and get back on your feet faster.

I physically feel shame in/on my _____.

My shame symptoms include:

I know I'm in shame when I feel _____.

If I could taste shame, it would taste like _____.

If I could smell shame, it would smell like _____.

If I could touch shame, it would feel like _____.

5) Who do you become when you're backed into that shame corner? How do you protect yourself?

When we value being cool and in control over granting ourselves the freedom to unleash the passionate, goofy, heartfelt and soulful expression of who we are, we betray ourselves. When we consistently betray ourselves, we can expect to do the same to the people we love.

6) If we believe that laughter, song and dance are essential to our soul-care, how do we make sure that we hold space for them in our lives?

7) Choose one of the following quotes and talk about why that one resonates or connected with you. What impact does it have on your journey as a foster parent?

- *Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do.*
- *Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy – the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.*

- *The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become.*
- *I define connection as 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.*
- *A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all women, men and children.*

It was clear from the data that we cannot give our children what we don't have. Where we are on our journey of living and loving with our whole hearts is a much stronger indicator of parenting success than anything we can learn from how-to books.

8) Do you see a relationship between where you are on your journey and parenting success?

9) Brené gives examples of “unraveling journeys,” including becoming a parent and an empty nest. Did you experience an unraveling during these experiences in your life? How did you move through these experiences?

10) Brené shares about picking her daughter Ellen up from a slumber party and commending her for practicing ordinary courage. Can you think of an example of a time when your child practiced ordinary courage? How did you respond? How could you encourage them?

11) *Perfectionism never happens in a vacuum. It touches everyone around us. We pass it down to our children... and it's suffocating for our friends and families.* How have you seen perfectionism being passed down to children? Do you feel perfectionism was passed down to you?

12) Brené writes that children most often learn hope from their parents. Did you learn hope from your parents? Do you think you are teaching hope to your children?

13) Brené shares about struggling to experience gratitude watching her children for fear. How have you experienced this as a parent? How do you feel you can shift towards fully experiencing gratitude?

14) *If we want to fully experience love and belonging, we must believe that we are worthy of love and belonging.* How has the inability to fully experience love and belonging affected your relationship to your partner, both in giving and receiving love? How has it impacted your relationships with your children?

Exploring Triggers and Vulnerabilities

Our unwanted identities dictate our behavior every day. It's worth it to figure them out and get real about them. Often, you'll see that the perceptions you want to have and want to avoid are totally unrealistic.

To get at shame triggers, figure out how you want to be perceived around a specific identity. So for example, with regards to motherhood, one might want to be perceived as calm, knowledgeable, educated and not perceived as overwhelmed, stressed out, unable to balance career and mothering, too ambitious. When we write these down and look at them, we understand the perceptions that make us vulnerable to shame. In the process, we learn a lot about ourselves.

15) To start, pick a shame category (body, work, motherhood, parenting, etc.) Then, answer the following questions.

5 Ideal Identities

I want to be perceived as:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3 - 5 Unwanted Identities

I do NOT want to be perceived as:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

16) Looking at your list of unwanted identities, answer the following questions next to the identity:

1. What do these perceptions mean to us?

2. Why are they so unwanted?

3. Where did the messages that fuel these identities come from?

17) Looking at your list of unwanted identities, complete the following sentence:

If you label me and reduce me to this list of unwanted identities, you will miss the opportunities to know that I'm complex and that I have any strengths, including:

1.

2.

3.

18) Share your 3 biggest takeaways from the audio book, how it impacted you, what you learned, how you may apply it to your journey of parenting.

1.

2.

3.

When this is complete, please forward it to records@readyforlife.net so we can give you the 2 hours of credit for completion. Please also remember to complete the At Home training form to give you additional credit for the Audiobook. Thanks!