

By **IMRAN HASHIM**
imran.hashim@leaderonomics.com

WOULD you be comfortable spending the entire day at work just reading a book? Honestly, when was the last time you saw anyone in the office spending an entire day just reading a book?

And if you were in that position, would you feel any tinge of uneasiness since you might think others might perceive you as slacking off? You might have a clue how it feels. Vulnerable. Almost shameful.

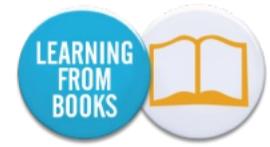
That was precisely what I felt as I spent an entire day at the office common area reading *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* by Brené Brown. But I was reading it with an additional purpose, that is, in order to write this article.

Rather fittingly, I discovered how exposed it felt to not be in front of my laptop, but instead snuggling up to cosy sofa and oversized pillows all to myself (We have a rather next-gen workplace).

In a normal office setting, that would be unimaginable and downright unproductive. And a sure fire way for disciplinary action. But reading about vulnerability gave me the surprising courage to do it.

The gist of the book is that shame can only truly dissipate by being allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Slightly ironic, but it

THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY



INSIGHTS FROM DARING GREATLY: HOW THE COURAGE TO BE VULNERABLE TRANSFORMS THE WAY WE LIVE, LOVE, PARENT, AND LEAD

helps that there's a happy ending to the premise: Vulnerability leads to happiness.

Here are some insights from the book:

1 BEWARE OF NEVER ENOUGH

"We're afraid that our truth isn't enough – that what we have to offer isn't enough without the bells and whistles, without editing, and impressing."

Observe your organisation. Chances are you can identify the over achievers simply by their rigor and tenacity in getting things done. You might even be one yourself. It's an elite status that can possibly harbour benefits. People generally look for you because you're capable.

Be wary of the potential side effects though. Our desire to achieve more, often at all cost, can be a ticking bomb. We can never feel enough, and that is why we always keep going.

The same doggedness is a one way ticket to high pressure, rapid burnout that will eventually cause health complications and deteriorating quality of life.

Whether you realise it or not, there is a shift in the social climate, which Brown calls a culture of scarcity. It is a pervasive sense that enough is never enough.

Things like entertainment shape and influence our perception of what is popular. Picture perfect celebrities make "normal" people feel inferior.

It is unfortunate that it leads us to compare our personal values with people who are not even remotely similar to us. Our fear of not being enough is what makes us model after people who we perceive as superior. We lose sense of ourselves, and it can be harmful to people around us. As a leader, or a team leader, or a parent, we need to be okay when we fall short.

2 WHOLEHEARTED LIVING

Compassion, connection, and courage. These things are the epitome of wholehearted living as advocated by

Brown. In essence, life can be better lived when you learn to manage vulnerability, a catalyst for courage and connection.

To achieve this, there are certain aspects in life that we need to work on:

- Let go of what people think.
- Let go of perfectionism.
- Let go of numbing and powerlessness.
- Let go of scarcity and fear of the dark.
- Let go of the need for certainty.
- Let go of comparison.
- Let go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth.
- Let go of anxiety as a life-style.
- Let go of self-doubt and "supposed to."
- Let go of being cool and "always in control."

Notice that all these address our innate human needs. This resonates even more if you put yourself as a parent raising children.

While there is the desire to provide and ensure your child can be his or her very best, the tendency to shape the future of your child according to your own defined image can be less than helpful.

Similar inclination might occur at the workplace, in a personal relationship, or even life in general. The key to wholehearted living is to live authentically, not as a projection or expectation of others.

Self-worth and "wholehearted" living comes from accepting we need to have courage, compassion with ourselves and other people, and connection.

3 UNCOVERING VULNERABILITY SHIELDS

Growing up, we gradually learned to shield ourselves from being exposed, being vulnerable, projecting an armour of emotional guards. We think that it protects us from being hurt or disappointed. The fear of being vilified seems to justify this, but unfortunately it works only one way.

Brown asserts that there is a paradox in this; we do our best to hide our shame, but it is the very first thing we look for in others.

Our shields are a mere defence mechanism from revealing our true selves. Instead of embracing joy, our inner cynics start to believe something will go wrong

somewhere.

The solution is to practise gratitude, to acknowledge and to celebrate the good things in life as they happen. Enjoy the moment and silence the sceptics within.

Striving for perfectionism all the time is another shield we put on. Not only can it be self-destructive, an addiction to it can put a considerable strain on everyone.

There is no shame in accepting that things may not turn out picture perfect all the time. Yes, public perception might paint you in a different light but you might want to take a pause and agree when it's enough.

Previous experience of shame and anxiety can also lead us to block or disconnect our emotions. It is another form of shield, one that is damaging to our relationships as we lose touch of real emotions.

This type of numbing removes our ability to empathise with discomfort and deal with thoughts and behaviours. As humans, we need to feel our feelings.

In all honesty, the book dives deeper than what is explored in this article. The research on vulnerability and shame is difficult, and Brown has done a terrific service to anyone and everyone looking to face their inner demons, or "gremlins" as she put it.

Instead of silencing them, "shame resilience" is important to fully engage in life, relationships, and enthusiasm for our work.

Daring Greatly is a timely reminder of the need to talk about shame. Above that, it offers valuable insights on how we deal with shame in society, relationships, families and at work.

It is well researched and gives guidelines for how we can manage shame and develop shame resilience by identifying the difference between shame and guilt, and finding ways to realise when we are shaming ourselves or others, or when others are shaming us.

■ *Imran Hashim is a talent acceleration manager with Leaderonomics. In the course of writing this piece, he experienced great vulnerability, but for good measure. Luckily, the advice in the book helped him to open up and be comfortable with it. To learn more about Leaderonomics, contact people@leaderonomics.com.*

Daring Greatly by Brené Brown is distributed by Penguin Books Malaysia and is available in all leading bookstores.



KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE RISING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

By **STEPHANIE HO**
stephanie.ho@leaderonomics.com

KUALA Lumpur Convention Centre (the Centre) which opened its doors in June 2005 is a nine-year-old establishment with a strong team of 320 employees. Striving to be an "Employer of Choice", it is constantly pushing barriers with various employee initiatives and platforms.

These include an open-door communication policy, internal focus groups aiming to refine practised policies and procedures, and a culture of recognition and performance incentives deeply ingrained in the organisa-

tional fabric. Perhaps due to all these initiatives, the organisation enjoys an employee turnover rate of less than 2% annually.

The Centre encourages training and development so employees can grow both professionally and personally. Last November, it launched its Talent Acceleration Programme (TAP), an 18-month fast-track programme for high potentials individuals at the managerial, assistant managerial and senior executive level.

The talent acceleration programme for the Centre has been specially crafted with the objective of accelerating the growth of high potentials in line with the leadership

pipeline. The first cohort consists of 25 team members across various functions within the organisation.

The programme places priority on developing people leadership skills, with elements of strategy and business acumen also infused. It aims to elevate the readiness and leadership capacity of upcoming centre leaders.

Though only four months into the programme, general manager Datuk Peter Brokenshire already observes increased energy levels in the participants, and an enhanced ability to grasp opportunities at the workplace.

"Overall, the TAP participants have embraced the programme enthusiastically, and management has high hopes for them and expects to see them succeed and move towards greater heights," he says.

"I truly believe that our team is our most valuable asset. Without them, our achievements would not have been possible. Moving forward, they must continue to deliver value to repeat and new clients through innovative product offerings and world class service, an approach that has kept them at the forefront of people's minds and continues to give them that competitive edge," says Brokenshire.