

# Atlas of the Heart

**Dr. Brené Brown** is a research professor at the University of Houston, where she holds the Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair at the Graduate College of Social Work. Brené is also a visiting professor in management at the University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business. She has spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy; is the author of five #1 *New York Times* best sellers; and is the host of the weekly Spotify original podcasts *Unlocking Us* and *Dare to Lead*.

That is the formal intro to Brené. I prefer this one: ***Brené's work has changed my life.. in a good way.*** I stalked Brené for a few years before realizing that she had a week-long certification program and that was the beginning of my magical connection to her and this work in 2013. In my 8+ years of being one of her Certified Facilitators and previously, her Canadian Case Consultant for the Daring Greatly program I have learned so much and meet so many amazing people. I use her work extensively with my individual/team coaching, with supervision clients and in my leadership development work.

Atlas of the Heart is her sixth and newest book and I'm delighted to offer a few of my reflections as I dug into my holiday read (vision sunshine, pool, palm trees):

What captured me the most as I dug in was:

- The layout of the book - it's colour, graphics and the feel and weight of it as it laid in my lap (audio version is due out in February 2022 I understand)
- The three-section framing of the book:
  - **One:** Brené's story about why emotions matter to her and why understanding them should matter to us
  - **Two:** Maps of 87 emotions that shape our experiences, captured in 13 interrelated groupings based on emotions and experiences. Brené focuses on four elements as she describes the emotions: biology, biography, behavior, and backstory. She asserts that "*language does not just communicate what we're feeling, but shapes it.. language is the raw material of story, it changes how we feel about ourselves and others and it's a portal to connection*".. which leads to the final section and one of my favourite parts of the book.
  - **Three:** This section deliciously knits the book together framed on cultivating meaningful connections. For my learning style, I should have read this section first. It would have set a context for the first two sections (beautiful graphics thanks to Gavin Aung Than).



- Brené is a master at integrating other authors and their research into her work and Atlas is no exception. She provides the reader with delicious alternative paths to explore (i.e., the Gottman's brilliant work on the Four Horsemen)
- Brené has a wonderful dialogue with herself in which she disputes some of her earlier writing based on her new research. An example: she has stopped believing we can truly recognize emotions in other people. What to do instead: "ask them" simple yet powerful and not a new idea for us coaches and supervisors
- New concepts to explore, such as "near and far enemies" (a Buddhist theory), "story stewardship" (honoring the sacred nature of stories that we hear and share, knowing that we've been entrusted with something valuable to be treated with respect and care), Schadenfreude (German, meaning pleasure or joy derived from someone else's suffering or misfortune) and Freudenfreude (German, the opposite of Schadenfreude, meaning it's the enjoyment of another's success, and a subset of empathy).

My one wish for Atlas of the Heart would be more practical application. I love facilitating my Dare to Lead™ (DTL) online cohorts. DTL is jammed with practical and applied tools for coaches, supervisors, leaders, facilitators and teams to readily access. It was my high dream for more of the same with Atlas. While I will enhance my DTL program with inspiring nuggets and update research from the new book, there is not a new curriculum here to share, in my opinion.

In closing here are a few of my favourite quotes:

- *"The limit of my language is the limit of my world."*
- *"To form meaningful connections with others, we must first connect with ourselves."*
- *"Disappointment is unmet expectations. The more significant the expectations, the more significant the disappointment."*
- *"Hope is a function of struggle—we develop hope not during the easy or comfortable times, but through adversity and discomfort."*

Thanks, I hope you enjoy your read too!

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