RISING STRONG

If we are brave enough,
often enough, we will fall.

This is a book about getting back up.

BRENÉ BROWN

THE TED TALK PHENOMENON

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About the Book

When you are brave in life, sometimes you fall. Even though you want to get back up, the stories you tell yourself about your personal and professional struggles keep you stuck in a cycle of fear, self-doubt and regret. *Rising Strong* will help you challenge those stories so you can rewrite your future.

Written by thought leader and bestselling author Brené Brown, *Rising Strong* is a very personal and practical guide to embracing fear and failure and creating a more courageous life. Building on Brené's groundbreaking research on vulnerability and daring, *Rising Strong* presents a powerful process to rise from falls, overcome mistakes and face hurt in a way that brings more wisdom and meaning into your life.

BRENÉ BROWN is a research professor at the University of Houston, where she has spent the past 13 years studying vulnerability, courage, worthiness and shame. The internationally bestselling author of *Daring Greatly*, her acclaimed TED talk has been watched by over 20 million people.

About the Author

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BY BRENÉ BROWN

Rising Strong

Daring Greatly

The Gifts of Imperfection

I Thought It Was Just Me

RISING STRONG

BRENÉ BROWN

Vermilion
LONDON

To the brave and brokenhearted who have taught us
how to rise after a fall.
Your courage is contagious.

A Note on Research

AND STORYTELLING AS METHODOLOGY

In the 1990s, when I began studying social work, the profession was in the midst of a polarizing debate about the nature of knowledge and truth. *Is wisdom derived from experience more or less valuable than data produced by controlled research? What research should we allow into our professional journals and what should we reject?* It was a heated debate that often created considerable friction between professors.

As doctoral students, we were often forced to take sides. Our research professors trained us to choose evidence over experience, reason over faith, science over art, and data over story. Ironically, at the exact same time, our non-research professors were teaching us that social work scholars should be wary of false dichotomies—those "either you're this or you're that" formulations. In fact, we learned that when faced with either-or dilemmas, the first question we should ask is, *Who benefits by forcing people to choose?*

If you applied the *Who benefits?* question to the debate in social work, the answer was clear: Traditional quantitative researchers benefited if the profession decided their work was the only path to truth. And tradition had the upper hand at my college, with little to no training in qualitative methods available and the only dissertation option quantitative. A single textbook covered qualitative research, and the book jacket was light pink—it was often referred to as "the girls'" research book.

This debate became personal to me when I fell in love with qualitative research—grounded theory research, to be

specific. I responded by pursuing it anyway, finding a few faculty allies inside and outside my college. I chose as my methodologist Barney Glaser, from the University of California San Francisco Medical School, who, along with Anselm Strauss, is the founder of grounded theory.

I am still deeply affected by an editorial I read in the 1990s titled "Many Ways of Knowing." It was written by Ann Hartman, the influential editor of one of our most prestigious journals at the time. In the editorial, Hartman wrote:

> This editor takes the position that there are many truths and there are many ways of knowing. Each discovery contributes to our knowledge, and each way of knowing deepens our understanding and adds another dimension to our view of the world.... For example, large-scale studies of trends in marriage today furnish helpful information about a rapidly changing social institution. But getting inside one marriage, as in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, richly displays the complexities of one marriage, leading us to new insights about the pain, the joys, the expectations, the disappointments, the intimacy, and the ultimate aloneness in relationships. Both the scientific and the artistic methods provide us with ways of knowing. And, in fact, as Clifford Geertz … has pointed out, innovative thinkers in many fields are blurring the genres, finding art in science and science in art and social theory in all human creation and activity.[1]

I succumbed to fear and scarcity (the sense that my chosen research method wasn't enough) for the first couple of years of my career as a tenure-track professor and researcher. I felt like an outsider as a qualitative researcher, so for safety I stood as close as I could to the "if

you can't measure it, it doesn't exist" crowd. That served both my political needs *and* my profound dislike of uncertainty. But I never got that editorial out of my head or my heart. And today I proudly call myself a researcher-storyteller because I believe the most useful knowledge about human behavior is based on people's lived experiences. I am incredibly grateful to Ann Hartman for having the guts to take this position, to Paul Raffoul, the professor who handed me a copy of that article, and to Susan Robbins, who bravely led my dissertation committee.

As you read through this book, you will see that I don't believe faith and reason are natural enemies. I believe our human desire for certainty and our often-desperate need to "be right" have led to this false dichotomy. I don't trust a theologian who dismisses the beauty of science or a scientist who doesn't believe in the power of mystery.

Because of this belief, I now find knowledge and truth in a full range of sources. In this book, you'll come across quotes from scholars and singer-songwriters. I'll quote research and movies. I'll share a letter from a mentor that helped me get a handle on what it means to get your heart broken and an editorial on nostalgia by a sociologist. I won't set up Crosby, Stills & Nash as academics, but I also won't diminish the ability of artists to capture what is true about the human spirit.

I'm also not going to pretend that I am an expert on every topic that emerged as important in this book's research. Instead, I will share the work of other researchers and experts whose work accurately captures what emerged in my data. I can't wait to introduce you to some of these thinkers and artists who have dedicated their careers to exploring the inner workings of emotion, thought, and behavior.

In early 2013, I received an angry email from a man upset about my quoting a lyric from a Rush song in *Daring*

Greatly.[2] He wrote, “I don’t want complex research summarized with rock lyrics.” I thought about responding with an elaborate explanation about the nature of conceptualizing in grounded theory research, but then I decided there was a simpler, more truthful answer: “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you just might find, you get what you need” (Professors Jagger and Richards, 1969).[3]

For more information on my methodology and current research, visit my website, brenebrown.com.

Thank you for joining me on this adventure.

The truth is that

FALLING HURTS.

THE DARE IS TO *keep being* BRAVE

and FEEL YOUR WAY BACK UP.

Truth and Dare

AN INTRODUCTION

During an interview in 2013, a reporter told me that after reading *The Gifts of Imperfection* and *Daring Greatly*, he wanted to start working on his own issues related to vulnerability, courage, and authenticity.[1] He laughed and said, “It sounds like it could be a long road. Can you give me the upside of doing this work?” I told him that with every ounce of my professional and personal being, I believe that vulnerability—the willingness to show up and be seen with no guarantee of outcome—is the only path to more love, belonging, and joy. He quickly followed up with, “And the downside?” This time I was the one laughing. “You’re going to stumble, fall, and get your ass kicked.”

There was a long pause before he said, “Is this where you tell me that you think daring is still worth it?” I responded with a passionate *yes*, followed by a confession: “Today it’s a solid *yes* because I’m not lying facedown after a hard fall. But even in the midst of struggle, I would still say that doing this work is not only worth it, it is *the work* of living a wholehearted life. But I promise that if you asked me about this in the midst of a fall, I’d be far less enthusiastic and way more pissed off. I’m not great at falling and feeling my way back.”

It’s been two years since that interview—two years of practicing being brave and putting myself out there—and vulnerability is still uncomfortable and falling still hurts. It always will. But I’m learning that the process of struggling and navigating hurt has as much to offer us as the process of being brave and showing up.

Over the past couple of years, I've had the privilege of spending time with some amazing people. They range from top entrepreneurs and leaders in Fortune 500 companies to couples who have maintained loving relationships for more than thirty years and parents working to change the education system. As they've shared their experiences and stories of being brave, falling, and getting back up, I kept asking myself: *What do these people with strong relationships, parents with deep connections to their children, teachers nurturing creativity and learning, clergy walking with people through faith, and trusted leaders have in common?* The answer was clear: They recognize the power of emotion and they're not afraid to lean in to discomfort.

While vulnerability is the birthplace of many of the fulfilling experiences we long for—love, belonging, joy, creativity, and trust, to name a few—the process of regaining our emotional footing in the midst of struggle is where our courage is tested and our values are forged. Rising strong after a fall is how we cultivate wholeheartedness in our lives; it's the process that teaches us the most about who we are.

In the past two years, my team and I have also received emails every week from people who write, "I dared greatly. I was brave. I got my butt kicked and now I'm down for the count. How do I get back up?" I knew when I was writing *The Gifts* and *Daring Greatly* that I would ultimately write a book about falling down. I've collected that data all along, and what I've learned about surviving hurt has saved me again and again. *It saved me and, in the process, it changed me.*

Here's how I see the progression of my work:

The Gifts of Imperfection—Be you.

Daring Greatly—Be all in.

Rising Strong—Fall. Get up. Try again.

The thread that runs through all three of these books is our yearning to live a wholehearted life. I define *wholehearted living* as 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 brave and worthy of love and belonging*.

Both *The Gifts* and *Daring Greatly* are "call to arms" books. They are about having the courage to show up and be seen even if it means risking failure, hurt, shame, and possibly even heartbreak. Why? Because hiding out, pretending, and armoring up against vulnerability are killing us: killing our spirits, our hopes, our potential, our creativity, our ability to lead, our love, our faith, and our joy. I think these books have resonated so strongly with people for two simple reasons: We're sick of being afraid and we're tired of hustling for our self-worth.

We want to be brave, and deep inside we know that being brave requires us to be vulnerable. The great news is that I think we're making serious headway. Everywhere I go, I meet people who tell me how they're leaning in to vulnerability and uncertainty—how it's changing their relationships and their professional lives.

We get thousands of emails from people who talk about their experiences of practicing the Ten Guideposts from *The Gifts*—even the hard ones like cultivating creativity, play, and self-compassion. I've worked alongside CEOs, teachers, and parents who are mounting major efforts to bring about cultural change based on the idea of showing up and daring greatly. The experience has been more than I ever imagined sixteen years ago when my husband, Steve, asked me, "What's the vision for your career?" and I

answered, “I want to start a global conversation about vulnerability and shame.”

If we’re going to put ourselves out there and love with our whole hearts, we’re going to experience heartbreak. If we’re going to try new, innovative things, we’re going to fail. If we’re going to risk caring and engaging, we’re going to experience disappointment. It doesn’t matter if our hurt is caused by a painful breakup or we’re struggling with something smaller, like an offhand comment by a colleague or an argument with an in-law. If we can learn how to feel our way through these experiences and own our stories of struggle, we can write our own brave endings. When we own our stories, we avoid being trapped as characters in stories someone else is telling.

The epigraph for *Daring Greatly* is Theodore Roosevelt’s powerful quote from his 1910 “Man in the Arena” speech:[2]

> It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; … who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while *daring greatly.*

It’s an inspiring quote that has truly become a touchstone for me. However, as someone who spends a lot of time in the arena, I’d like to focus on one particular piece of Roosevelt’s speech: “The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood”—STOP. (Imagine the sound of a needle scratching across a record.) Stop here. Before I hear anything else about triumph or achievement, this is where I

want to slow down time so I can figure out exactly what happens next.

We're facedown in the arena. Maybe the crowd has gone silent, the way it does at football games or my daughter's field hockey matches when the players on the field take a knee because someone is hurt. Or maybe people have started booing and jeering. Or maybe you have tunnel vision and all you can hear is your parent screaming, "Get up! Shake it off!"

Our "facedown" moments can be big ones like getting fired or finding out about an affair, or they can be small ones like learning a child has lied about her report card or experiencing a disappointment at work. Arenas always conjure up grandeur, but an arena is any moment when or place where we have risked showing up and being seen. Risking being awkward and goofy at a new exercise class is an arena. Leading a team at work is an arena. A tough parenting moment puts us in the arena. Being in love is definitely an arena.

When I started thinking about this research, I went to the data and asked myself, *What happens when we're facedown? What's going on in this moment? What do the women and men who have successfully staggered to their feet and found the courage to try again have in common? What is the process of* rising strong?

I wasn't positive that slowing down time to capture the process was possible, but I was inspired by Sherlock Holmes to give it a shot. In early 2014, I was drowning in data and my confidence was waning. I was also coming off a tough holiday, when I had spent most of my scheduled vacation time fighting off a respiratory virus that hit Houston like a hurricane. One night in February, I snuggled up on the couch with my daughter, Ellen, to watch the newest season of Masterpiece's *Sherlock* with Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman.[3] (I'm a huge fan.)

In Season 3, there's an episode where Sherlock is shot. *Don't worry, I won't say by whom or why, but, wow, I did not see it coming*. The moment he's shot, time stops. Rather than immediately falling, Sherlock goes into his "mind palace"—that crazy cognitive space where he retrieves memories from cerebral filing cabinets, plots car routes, and makes impossible connections between random facts. Over the next ten minutes or so, many of the cast of recurring characters appear in his mind, each one working in his or her area of expertise and talking him through the best way to stay alive.

First, the London coroner who has a terrific crush on Sherlock shows up. She shakes her head at Sherlock, who seems completely taken aback by his inability to make sense of what's happening, and comments, "It's not like it is in the movies, is it, Sherlock?" Aided by a member of the forensics team at New Scotland Yard and Sherlock's menacing brother, she explains the physics of how he should fall, how shock works, and what he can do to keep himself conscious. The three warn him when pain is coming and what he can expect. What probably takes three seconds in real time plays out for more than ten minutes on the screen. I thought the writing was genius, and it re-energized my efforts to keep at my own slow-motion project.

My goal for this book is to slow down the falling and rising processes: to bring into our awareness all the choices that unfurl in front of us during those moments of discomfort and hurt, and to explore the consequences of those choices. Much as in my other books, I'm using research and storytelling to unpack what I've learned. The only difference here is that I'm sharing many more of my personal stories. These narratives grant me not only a front-row seat to watch what's playing out onstage, but also a backstage pass to access the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are taking place behind the scenes. In my

stories, I have the details. It's like watching the director's cut of a movie or choosing the bonus feature on a DVD that allows you to listen to the director talk through decisions and thought processes. This is not to say that I can't capture details from other people's experiences—I do it all the time. I just can't weave together history, context, emotion, behavior, and thinking with the same density.

During the final stages of developing the rising strong theory, I met with small groups of people familiar with my work to share my findings and gather feedback from their perspectives on the fit and relevance of the theory. Was I on the right track? Later, two of the participants in those meetings reached out to share their experiences of applying the rising strong process in their lives. I was moved by what they shared and asked if I could include it in this book. They both agreed, and I'm grateful. Their stories are powerful examples of rising.

On a cultural level, I think the absence of honest conversation about the hard work that takes us from lying facedown in the arena to rising strong has led to two dangerous outcomes: the propensity to gold-plate grit and a badassery deficit.

GOLD-PLATING GRIT

We've all fallen, and we have the skinned knees and bruised hearts to prove it. But scars are easier to talk about than they are to show, with all the remembered feelings laid bare. And rarely do we see wounds that are in the process of healing. I'm not sure if it's because we feel too much shame to let anyone see a process as intimate as overcoming hurt, or if it's because even when we muster the courage to share our still-incomplete healing, people reflexively look away.

We much prefer stories about falling and rising to be inspirational and sanitized. Our culture is rife with these tales. In a thirty-minute speech, there's normally thirty seconds dedicated to "And I fought my way back," or "And then I met someone new," or, as in the case of my TEDx talk, simply "It was a street fight."

We like recovery stories to move quickly through the dark so we can get to the sweeping redemptive ending. I worry that this lack of honest accounts of overcoming adversity has created a Gilded Age of Failure. The past couple of years have given rise to failure conferences, failure festivals, and even failure awards. Don't get me wrong. I love and continue to champion the idea of understanding and accepting failure as part of any worthwhile endeavor. But embracing failure without acknowledging the real hurt and fear that it can cause, or the complex journey that underlies rising strong, is gold-plating grit. To strip failure of its real emotional consequences is to scrub the concepts of grit and resilience of the very qualities that make them both so important—toughness, doggedness, and perseverance.

Yes, there can be no innovation, learning, or creativity without failure. *But failing is painful. It fuels the "shouldas and couldas," which means judgment and shame are often lying in wait.*

Yes, I agree with Tennyson, who wrote, "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."[4] *But heartbreak knocks the wind out of you, and the feelings of loss and longing can make getting out of bed a monumental task. Learning to trust and lean in to love again can feel impossible.*

Yes, if we care enough and dare enough, we will experience disappointment. *But in those moments when disappointment is washing over us and we're desperately trying to get our heads and hearts around what is or is not*

going to be, the death of our expectations can be painful beyond measure.

The work being done by Ashley Good is a great example of how we must embrace the difficult emotion of falling. Good is the founder and CEO of Fail Forward—a social enterprise with the mission to help organizations develop cultures that encourage the risk taking, creativity, and continuous adaptation required for innovation.[5] She got started as a development worker in Ghana with Engineers Without Borders Canada (EWB) and was integral to the development of EWB's failure reports and AdmittingFailure.com, a kind of online failure report where anyone can submit stories of failure and learning.

These first reports were bold attempts to break the silence that surrounds failure in the nonprofit sector—a sector dependent on external funding. Frustrated by the learning opportunities missed because of that silence, EWB collected its failures and published them in a glossy annual report. The organization's commitment to solving some of the world's most difficult problems, like poverty, requires innovation and learning, so it put achieving its mission before looking good, and sparked a revolution.

In her keynote address at FailCon Oslo—an annual failure conference in Norway—Good asked the audience for words they associated with the term *failure.* The audience members shouted out the following: *sadness, fear, making a fool of myself, desperation, panic, shame*, and *heartbreak*. Then she held up EWB's failure report and explained that the thirty glossy pages included fourteen stories of failure, proving that EWB had failed at least fourteen times in the last year. She then asked the same audience what words they would use to describe the report and the people who submitted their stories. This time the words shouted out included: *helping, generous, open, knowledgeable, brave*, and *courageous*.

Good made the powerful point that there's a vast difference between how we think about the term *failure* and how we think about the people and organizations brave enough to share their failures for the purpose of learning and growing. To pretend that we can get to *helping, generous*, and *brave* without navigating through tough emotions like *desperation, shame*, and *panic* is a profoundly dangerous and misguided assumption. Rather than gold-plating grit and trying to make failure look fashionable, we'd be better off learning how to recognize the beauty in truth and tenacity.

THE BADASSERY DEFICIT

I know, *badassery* is a strange term, but I couldn't come up with another one that captures what I mean. When I see people stand fully in their truth, or when I see someone fall down, get back up, and say, "Damn. That really hurt, but this is important to me and I'm going in again"—my gut reaction is, "What a badass."

There are too many people today who instead of *feeling hurt* are *acting out their hurt;* instead of *acknowledging pain*, they're *inflicting pain* on others. Rather than risking *feeling disappointed*, they're choosing to *live disappointed*. Emotional stoicism is not badassery. Blustery posturing is not badassery. Swagger is not badassery. Perfection is about the furthest thing in the world from badassery.

To me the real badass is the person who says, "Our family is really hurting. We could use your support." And the man who tells his son, "It's okay to be sad. We all get sad. We just need to talk about it." And the woman who says, "Our team dropped the ball. We need to stop blaming each other and have some tough conversations about what happened so we can fix it and move forward." People who wade into

discomfort and vulnerability and tell the truth about their stories are the real badasses.

Daring is essential to solve the problems in the world that feel intractable: poverty, violence, inequality, trampled civil rights, and a struggling environment, to name a few. But in addition to having people who are willing to show up and be seen, we also need a critical mass of badasses who are willing to dare, fall, feel their way through tough emotion, and rise again. And we need these folks leading, modeling, and shaping culture in every capacity, including as parents, teachers, administrators, leaders, politicians, clergy, creatives, and community organizers.

So much of what we hear today about courage is inflated and empty rhetoric that camouflages personal fears about one's likability, ratings, and ability to maintain a level of comfort and status. We need more people who are willing to demonstrate what it looks like to risk and endure failure, disappointment, and regret—people willing to feel their own hurt instead of working it out on other people, people willing to own their stories, live their values, and keep showing up. I feel so lucky to have spent the past couple of years working with some true badasses, from teachers and parents to CEOs, filmmakers, veterans, human-resource professionals, school counselors, and therapists. We'll explore what they have in common as we move through the book, but here's a teaser: They're curious about the emotional world and they face discomfort straight-on.

My hope is that the process outlined in this book gives us language and a rough map that will guide us in getting back on our feet. I'm sharing everything I know, feel, believe, and have experienced about rising strong. I'll tell you once more that what I learned from the research participants continues to save me, and I'm deeply grateful for that. The truth is that falling hurts. The dare is to keep being brave and feel your way back up.

WE ARE

BORN MAKERS.

We move

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

from our

HEADS

to our

HEARTS

through our

HANDS.

One

THE PHYSICS OF VULNERABILITY

WHEN IT COMES to human behavior, emotions, and thinking, the adage "The more I learn, the less I know" is right on. I've learned to give up my pursuit of netting certainty and pinning it to the wall. Some days I miss pretending that certitude is within reach. My husband, Steve, always knows I'm mourning the loss of my young-researcher quest when I am holed up in my study listening to David Gray's song "My Oh My" on repeat.[1] My favorite lyrics are

> *What on earth is going on in my head?*
> *You know I used to be so sure.*
> *You know I used to be so definite.*

And it's not just the lyrics; it's the way that he sings the word *def.in.ite*. Sometimes, it sounds to me as if he's mocking the arrogance of believing that we can ever know everything, and other times it sounds like he's pissed off that we can't. Either way, singing along makes me feel better. Music always makes me feel less alone in the mess.

While there are really no hard-and-fast absolutes in my field, there are truths about shared experiences that deeply resonate with what we believe and know. For example, the Roosevelt quote that anchors my research on vulnerability and daring gave birth to three truths for me:

I want to be in the arena. I want to be brave with my life. And when we make the choice to dare greatly, we sign up to get our asses kicked. We can choose courage or we

can choose comfort, but we can't have both. Not at the same time.

Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it's having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it's our greatest measure of courage.

A lot of cheap seats in the arena are filled with people who never venture onto the floor. They just hurl mean-spirited criticisms and put-downs from a safe distance. The problem is, when we stop caring what people think and stop feeling hurt by cruelty, we lose our ability to connect. But when we're defined by what people think, we lose the courage to be vulnerable. Therefore, we need to be selective about the feedback we let into our lives. For me, if you're not in the arena getting your ass kicked, I'm not interested in your feedback.

I don't think of these as "rules," but they have certainly become guiding principles for me. I believe there are also some basic tenets about being brave, risking vulnerability, and overcoming adversity that are useful to understand before we get started. I think of these as the basic laws of emotional physics: simple but powerful truths that help us understand why courage is both transformational and rare. These are the rules of engagement for rising strong.

1. If we are brave enough often enough, we will fall; this is the physics of vulnerability. When we commit to showing up and *risking* falling, we are actually committing to falling. Daring is not saying, "I'm willing to risk failure." Daring is saying, "I know I will eventually fail and I'm still all in." Fortune may favor the bold, but so does failure.

2. Once we fall in the service of being brave, we can never go back. We can rise up from our failures, screwups, and falls, but we can never go back to where we stood before we were brave or before we fell. Courage transforms the emotional structure of our being. This

change often brings a deep sense of loss. During the process of rising, we sometimes find ourselves homesick for a place that no longer exists. We want to go back to that moment before we walked into the arena, but there's nowhere to go back to. What makes this more difficult is that now we have a new level of awareness about what it means to be brave. We can't fake it anymore. We now know when we're showing up and when we're hiding out, when we are living our values and when we are not. Our new awareness can also be invigorating—it can reignite our sense of purpose and remind us of our commitment to wholeheartedness. Straddling the tension that lies between wanting to go back to the moment before we risked and fell and being pulled forward to even greater courage is an inescapable part of rising strong.

3. This journey belongs to no one but you; however, no one successfully goes it alone. Since the beginning of time, people have found a way to rise after falling, yet there is no well-worn path leading the way. All of us must make our own way, exploring some of the most universally shared experiences while also navigating a solitude that makes us feel as if we are the first to set foot in uncharted regions. And to add to the complexity, in lieu of the sense of safety to be found in a well-traveled path or a constant companion, we must learn to depend for brief moments on fellow travelers for sanctuary, support, and an occasional willingness to walk side by side. For those of us who fear being alone, coping with the solitude inherent in this process is a daunting challenge. For those of us who prefer to cordon ourselves off from the world and heal alone, the requirement for connection—of asking for and receiving help—becomes the challenge.

4. We're wired for story. In a culture of scarcity and perfectionism, there's a surprisingly simple reason we want to own, integrate, and share our stories of struggle. We do this because we feel the most alive when we're connecting

with others and being brave with our stories—it's in our biology. The idea of storytelling has become ubiquitous. It's a platform for everything from creative movements to marketing strategies. But the idea that we're "wired for story" is more than a catchy phrase. Neuroeconomist Paul Zak has found that hearing a story—a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end—causes our brains to release cortisol and oxytocin.[2] These chemicals trigger the uniquely human abilities to connect, empathize, and make meaning. Story is literally in our DNA.

5. Creativity embeds knowledge so that it can become practice. We move what we're learning from our heads to our hearts through our hands. We are born makers, and creativity is the ultimate act of integration—it is how we fold our experiences into our being. Over the course of my career, the question I've been asked more than any other is, "How do I take what I'm learning about myself and actually change how I'm living?" After teaching graduate social work students for eighteen years; developing, implementing, and evaluating two curricula over the past eight years; leading more than seventy thousand students through online learning courses; and interviewing hundreds of creatives, I've come to believe that creativity is the mechanism that allows learning to seep into our being and become practice. The Asaro tribe of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea has a beautiful saying: "Knowledge is only a rumor until it lives in the muscle." What we understand and learn about rising strong is only rumor until we live it and integrate it through some form of creativity so that it becomes part of us.

6. Rising strong is the same process whether you're navigating personal or professional struggles. I've spent equal time researching our personal and our professional lives, and while most of us would like to believe that we can have home and work versions of rising

strong, we can't. Whether you're a young man dealing with heartbreak, a retired couple struggling with disappointment, or a manager trying to recover after a failed project, the practice is the same. We have no sterile business remedy for having fallen. We still need to dig into the grit of issues like resentment, grief, and forgiveness. As neuroscientist Antonio Damasio reminds us, humans are not either thinking machines or feeling machines, but rather feeling machines that think. Just because you're standing in your office or your classroom or your studio doesn't mean that you can take the emotion out of this process. You cannot. Remember those badasses I referenced in the introduction? One more thing they have in common is that they don't try to avoid emotions—they are feeling machines who think and engage with their own emotions and the emotions of the people they love, parent, and lead. The most transformative and resilient leaders that I've worked with over the course of my career have three things in common: First, they recognize the central role that relationships and story play in culture and strategy, and they stay curious about their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Second, they understand and stay curious about how emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are connected in the people they lead, and how those factors affect relationships and perception. And, third, they have the ability and willingness to lean in to discomfort and vulnerability.

7. Comparative suffering is a function of fear and scarcity. Falling down, screwing up, and facing hurt often lead to bouts of second-guessing our judgment, our self-trust, and even our worthiness. *I am enough* can slowly turn into *Am I really enough?* If there's one thing I've learned over the past decade, it's that fear and scarcity immediately trigger comparison, and even pain and hurt are not immune to being assessed and ranked. *My husband died and that grief is worse than your grief over an empty*