**Gifting the Gifted: Parenting Your Exceptional Child**

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*“What we are teaches the child more than what we say, so we must BE what we want our children to become.”—Joseph Chilton Pearce*

**The Gift of Imperfection:** Unpacking the trappings of perfectionism, means that we master the paradox of both striving for excellence and being imperfect, and then model this to our kids.

* An arena in my life where being perfect matters a lot is:
* My efforts to be perfect make me feel:
* Perfectionism tells others:

**Shame is the birthplace of perfectionism:** *“We are psychologically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging. Connection is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. Shame is the fear of disconnection—it’s the fear that something we’ve done or failed to do, an ideal that we’ve not lived up to, or a goal that we’ve not accomplished makes us unworthy of connection. Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.” --Dr. Brené Brown*

**Perfectionism Myths:**

Myth #1: Perfectionism is simply striving to be my best.

**Truth:** Healthy striving is self-focused and it asks: “How can I improve?”

Perfectionism is other-focused and it asks: “What will they think?”

Perfectionism is not self-improvement. It is, at core about trying to earn approval and acceptance.

Myth #2: Perfectionism works:

**Truth:** Perfectionism is a self-destructive and addictive belief system that fuels this primary thought: If I look perfect, live perfectly, and do everything perfectly, I can avoid or minimize the painful feelings of criticism, judgment, and shame. It is addictive because when failure inevitably happens, we go to the belief that it happened because I just wasn’t perfect enough, so we strive to gain even more perfection. Research shows that perfectionism hampers success, and in fact is often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction, and life-paralysis.

**Wholehearted people live from a place of worthiness:**

*“The opposite of imperfection is not perfection, but wholeness.” –Richard Rohr*

*“The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.”* - Anna Quindlen

* Wholehearted people speak about their imperfections in a tender and honest way, and without shame and fear.
* Wholehearted people are slow to judge themselves and others. They operate from a place of “We’re all doing the best we can.”

**The Gift of Vulnerability:** Vulnerability is the birthplace for connection, and yet is a risky endeavor with the potential for both pain and intimacy.

**Vulnerability Myths: from the research of Dr. Brené Brown**

Myth #1: Vulnerability is weakness.

**Truth:** Vulnerability actually is courage. The paradox is: In you, vulnerability looks like courage; in me, vulnerability feels like weakness. It is the first thing I want to see in you and the last thing I want you to see in me.

Myth #2: I can opt out of vulnerability.

**Truth:** To be alive is to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. You can’t avoid these because it is how we are built.

Myth # 3: Vulnerability is oversharing.

**Truth:** Oversharing often disconnects or connects superficially. Vulnerability is sharing with the intention to connect. It is about trust, intimacy and connection. Vulnerability is the birthplace of intimacy.

**The Gift of Boundaries:** Setting clear boundaries, and letting the boundaries be the “bad guy” sets YOU up to be in your child’s support section.

*Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others. We can't base our own worthiness on others' approval. Only when we believe, deep down, that we are enough can we say "Enough!" –Dr. Brené Brown*

* Simple Definition of Boundaries: Getting clear on what’s Okay and what’s not Okay
* A Boundary Mantra per Brené Brown: ***Chose discomfort over resentment.***
* When do I have a hard time saying “No”? When do I have a hard time saying, “Yes”? What barriers do I face in setting healthy boundaries?

**The Gift of Failure:** Failure is excruciating. It is also the place where growth occurs. We give a great gift when we allow our kids to fail, and then be a safe place to fall.

* When I fail, I feel:
* Failure tells others:

**Shame** –Shame is “I am bad.” The focus is on self, not behavior, with the result that we feel alone. Shame is never known to lead us toward positive change.

**Guilt** –Guilt is “I did something bad.” The focus is on behavior. Guilt has the potential to motivate us toward positive change.

**Humiliation** - The differentiating factor is whether it is deserving.

**Embarrassment** - Normally fleeting and it can eventually be funny. We don’t feel alone.

~~From the research of Dr. Brené Brown

*“Imperfect parenting moments turn into gifts as our children watch us try to figure out what went wrong and how we can do better next time. The mandate is not to be perfect and raise happy children. Perfection doesn’t exist and I’ve found that what makes children happy doesn’t always prepare them to be courageous, engaged adults. “* *Daring Greatly*, Dr. Brené Brown

*“The word failure is imperfect. Once we begin to transform it, it ceases to be that any longer. The term is always slipping off the edges of our vision, not simply because it’s hard to see without wincing, but because once we are ready to talk about it, we often call the event something else – a learning experience, a trail, a reinvention – no longer the static concept of failure.”* *The Rise*, Sarah Lewis

**The Gift of Compassion**: In the midst of shame, disappointment, failure, and struggle, compassion can be a game changer.

Shame and the petri dish: *“When shame is doused with criticism, fear, judgment it grows expedientially. When shame is doused with empathy and self-compassion, it cannot survive.”—*Dr. Brené Brown

**Empathy:** in it’s simplest form it is “being with”. It fuels connection.

Empathy Busters Empathy Golden Words

**Self-compassion**:  *“Self kindness means that we stop the constant self-judgment and disparaging internal commentary that most of us have come to see as normal. It requires us to understand our failures instead of condemning them. It entails clearly seeing the extent to which we harm ourselves through relentless self-criticism. It involves actively comforting ourselves, responding just as we would to a dear friend in need. It means we allow ourselves to be emotionally moved by our own pain, stopping to say, ‘This is really difficult right now. How can I care for and comfort myself in this moment.’” -*-Kristin Neff

*“A moment of self compassion can change your entire day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.”* Christopher Germer

**The Gifts of Laughter, Song, Dance, Rest, and Play:** Let’s debunk the idea that these are all unnecessary frills, and learn how they are really the fabric of whole hearted living.

**Bucket List of Play:**

15 Minutes

1 Hour:

½ Day:

1 Day:

1 Week:

**Resources:**

The Gifts of Imperfection, Daring Greatly, Rising Strong….all by Dr. Brené Brown

The Gifts of Imperfect Parenting DVD by Dr. Brené Brown

Declining Student Resilience: A Serious Problem for Colleges by Peter Gray Ph.D. in Psychology Today

Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff

TED Talks on Shame and Vulnerability by Dr. Brené Brown

Empathy Cartoon by Brené Brown (You Tube)

It’s Not about the Nail (You Tube)

I Don’t Know How She Does It (Momsters clip on You Tube)

For counseling resources for children, teens, and parenting, contact Family Legacy counseling at [www.familylegacycounseling.com](http://www.familylegacycounseling.com) or 515-727-1338.

**The Wholehearted Parenting Manifesto**

**by Brené Brown**

Above all else, I want you to know that you are loved and lovable.

You will learn this from my words and actions–the lessons on love are in how I treat you and how I treat myself.

I want you to engage with the world from a place of worthiness. You will learn that you are worthy of love, belonging, and joy every time you see me practice self-compassion and embrace my own imperfections.

We will practice courage in our family by showing up, letting ourselves be seen, and honoring vulnerability. We will share our stories of struggle and strength. There will always be room in our home for both.

We will teach you compassion by practicing compassion with ourselves first; then with each other.

We will set and respect boundaries; we will honor hard work, hope, and perseverance.

Rest and play will be family values, as well as family practices.

You will learn accountability and respect by watching me make mistakes and make amends, and by watching how I ask for what I need and talk about how I feel.

I want you to know joy, so together we will practice gratitude.

I want you to feel joy, so together we will learn how to be vulnerable.

When uncertainty and scarcity visit, you will be able to draw from the spirit that is a part of our everyday life. Together we will cry and face fear and grief. I will want to take away your pain, but instead I will sit with you and teach you how to feel it.

We will laugh and sing and dance and create. We will always have permission to be ourselves with each other. No matter what, you will always belong here.

As you begin your wholehearted journey, the greatest gift that I can give to you is to live and love with my whole heart and to dare greatly.

I will not teach or love or show you anything perfectly, but I will let you see me, and I will always hold sacred the gift of seeing you.

Truly, deeply, seeing you.