

## ***Dare to Lead*** **by Brené Brown**

In the introduction of her new 2018 book, author Brené Brown summarizes interviews with 150 global C-level leaders on the future of leadership. Here are a few of the questions and responses.

1. *What, if anything about the way people are leading today needs to change in order for leaders to be successful in a complex, rapidly changing environment where we're faced with seemingly intractable challenges and an insatiable demand for innovation?*

One answer transcended all her interviews: **We need brave leaders and courageous cultures.**

Brown asked lots of questions to better understand the “why” behind the call for braver leaders. She received a variety of responses and then asked this question:

2. *Can you break down the specific skills that you believe underpin brave leadership?*

The leaders struggled with answering this and focused their responses more on personality traits than skills and competencies. So, she asked this:

3. *What does it look like if you have it?*

Again, leaders struggled with identifying skills and focused on behaviors. They were able to identify problematic behaviors and cultural norms that corrode trust and courage. She writes ten behaviors and cultural norms that the leaders she interviewed identified as getting in the way of organizational growth. The first one is relevant to our journey to create a culture based on our shared values and links to our new performance feedback process.

*We avoid tough conversations, including giving honest, productive feedback. Some leaders attributed this to a lack of courage, others to a lack of skills, and, shockingly, more than half talked about a cultural norm of “nice and polite” that’s leveraged as an excuse to avoid tough conversations. Whatever the reason, there was saturation across the data that the consequence is a lack of clarity, diminishing trust and engagement, and an increase in problematic behavior, including passive-aggressive behavior, talking behind people’s backs, pervasive back channel communication (or “the meeting after the meeting”), gossip, and the “dirty yes” (when I say yes to your face and then no behind your back).*

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Addendum to Values-Based Culture Field Guide sections on Courage and Critical Conversations.