



Wellbeing Tips

Head, Heart and Hands framework

Exploring emotions with Brene Brown

Experiences such as grief and chronic stress can easily overwhelm the mind and body, particularly within veteran families who may be carrying layers of loss, uncertainty, and responsibility. The Head, Heart, Hands framework aligns with Brené Brown's research on emotions encouraging us to notice our thoughts (Head), name our emotions (Heart), and choose small acts of care (Hands), to reduce shame, build understanding, and invite courage into our lives. There are many ways that this tool can be used in your life such as prompts for journalling, an artwork or a discussion starter to explore your emotions and the mind-body connection in grief.

Brené reminds us that humans are “story-making creatures.” When answers are unclear, for example when grieving, our minds naturally fill the gaps. These stories aren't failures, they are attempts to cope. Using Brené's phrase, “The story I'm telling myself is...”, can help us to gently notice looping thoughts, assumptions, or unanswered ‘why’ questions. Observing our stories without judgement creates space for clarity, compassion, and self-kindness.

Complex emotions such as grief are rarely just one emotion. For example, grief often includes love, sadness, anger, guilt, relief, and hope. Sometimes separately and sometimes all at once. Brené's research shows that the more precisely we can name our emotions, the better we can navigate them. Naming feelings doesn't intensify them. In fact, it helps contain them. When emotions are acknowledged and witnessed, they can soften.

Brené defines courage simply as showing up, even when the outcome is uncertain. It can be a small, compassionate action such as resting, setting a boundary, lighting a candle, or reaching out for support. Your emotions and experiences deserve patience, respect, and care. You don't have to carry them perfectly, and you don't have to carry them alone. Sometimes, the bravest thing we can do is simply allow ourselves to notice, name, and honour what is coming up for us in the moment and not feel we have to react to it.