



Wellbeing Tips

Brené Brown's Atlas of the Heart



The power of curiosity

It is common for us to quickly judge and criticise our thoughts and feelings. But what if we look at them through a different lens and become curious instead? In her book, 'Atlas of the Heart', Brené Brown says that curiosity is an important part of our need for making meaning. Curiosity is the recognition of gaps in our knowledge and can lead to exploration and learning.

Curiosity invites us to ask ourselves:

- How am I feeling?
- What is contributing to these feelings?
- What do I need right now?
- Are there different ways of viewing this situation?

Curiosity encourages us to step back from the situation and observe through another lens. Curiosity is about creating space to consider alternative perspectives and respond with self-compassion, rather than criticism. Curiosity urges us to recognise that our thoughts may be interpretations, rather than concrete facts, and our thoughts can fill in the gaps, make assumptions and predict future outcomes. However, curiosity for many of us means being vulnerable, as it requires us to venture into uncertainty. This exploration can lead to feelings of discomfort or hurt.

Curiosity is a mindfulness practice that requires consistent practice, little by little, so it is okay if this is hard at first.

Brené Brown reminds us that language matters and that the more accurately we name emotions, the better we can respond. For example, using the word "overwhelmed" to describe our feelings, may lead to a different response than using the word "stressed". Through accurately naming emotions, we can identify what support and action is required.

A simple practice we can use to curiously explore our challenging emotions is asking ourselves;

- "Is this thought completely true?"
- "What would I say to a friend if they were in this situation?"
- "What else could be true?"
- "Maybe, I don't have enough information yet."
- "Am I certain, or just assuming?"

By approaching with curiosity and asking exploratory questions, we can slow down, challenge assumptions, and respond with greater self-compassion, which we all deserve. "Curiosity is an act of vulnerability and courage. We need to be brave enough to want to know more."

— Brené Brown