

Brene Brown The Man In The Arena Speech (edited)

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Summary

Title

Reflections on “The Man in the Arena” Speech and the Courage to Show Up and Create

Main Topics

- Searching for Theodore Roosevelt after watching Downton Abbey
- “The Man in the Arena” speech (the Sorbonne, the early twentieth century)
- Three points that changed the speaker's life:
 1. Vulnerability and showing up—not winning or losing
 2. Committing to creativity despite the inevitability of defeat at times
 3. A new philosophy of criticism: I do not listen to those who are not in the arena
 - The role of academic support and constructive criticism
 - A reference to her husband, Steve, and the impact of change on her courage

Key Information

- The central quotation: “It is not the critic who counts... the credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena... who knows, at best, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at worst, fails while daring greatly.”
- The only certainty upon entering the arena: “You will be defeated.”
- The standard for accepting criticism: If you are not in the arena, “I am not interested in your opinion.”

Detailed Summary

After the end of one of the episodes of Downton Abbey, the speaker searched for the American president who was in office during that era and chose Theodore Roosevelt. She came across “The Man in the Arena” speech, which Roosevelt delivered at the Sorbonne at the beginning of the twentieth century. Reading the quoted passage turned her concepts upside down and brought about a radical transformation in three respects:

1. After 12 years of studying vulnerability, she realized that its essence lies in “showing up,” not in the results of winning or losing.

2. She decided to be creative—to make something that had not existed before she touched it—aware that creativity requires facing inevitable defeats.
3. She adopted a firm stance toward criticism: she welcomes only constructive criticism from those who share the risk with her. As for those who merely comment from the outside, they will not be heard.

According to her husband, Steve, this transformation made her bolder. Although she is an academic who values documentation and improvement, she came to reject comments from those who do not participate.

Action Points / Insights

- Choosing creativity and showing up requires accepting defeat as an inherent part of the journey.
- Sorting criticism by its source: embracing detailed, constructive criticism and rejecting passing opinions from those who are not genuinely involved.
- Applying the philosophy of “The Man in the Arena” can change an individual's perspective on failure and success.

Conclusion

Roosevelt's quotation inspired the speaker to live with courage and creativity, convinced that true value lies in active participation rather than outside commentary, and that temporary defeat is a necessary price for anyone who enters “the arena.”

Transcript

So, I took out my laptop and searched for the president of the United States during the Downton Abbey series. Have you ever done that, like you're numbing yourself by watching TV or a movie, and when it's over, you're immersed in that state, looking more for the actors and the events of the series? Well, I've been doing this long enough to know you're laughing with me, not me. So, I entered Theodore Roosevelt's name in the search, and I saw quotes from it. I read it, and that's what it says. They are quotes from a speech he gave in the early twentieth century at the Sorbonne, called by many the "man in the square" speech, and this is the paragraph that changed my life. It is not the critic who matters, nor is it the one who points out the mistakes of the strongman or how the actor could have behaved better. The credit goes to those who go through the experience themselves. A face stained with blood, sweat and dust. Who knows, at best, the pleasure of great achievement, and who fails, at worst, fails miserably in the face of the challenge. So, as soon as I read that, I shut down my computer, and that's what changed inside me. Three fundamental things. First, I've spent the last 12 years studying the concept of vulnerability, and that saying embodies everything I know about it. It's not about winning, not losing, it's about showing up and showing up. Second, that's what I want to be. I want to create. I want to make things that didn't exist before I touched them. I want to show up and see in my work and my life. If you want to be seen and seen, there is only one guarantee, and that is that you will face a crushing defeat. This is a guarantee. That's the only certainty you have. If you're going to enter the arena and spend any time in it, especially if you're committed to creativity in your life, you're bound to be defeated. So, you have to decide in that moment, I think for all of us, if

courage is a value that we believe in, it's an inevitable outcome. The third thing, which really liberated me, and I think Steve, my husband, would say that it made me a little bold, is a kind of new philosophy about criticism, which is this: If you're not also in the arena and you're being defeated, I'm not interested in what you think. It's over. That's it. Nope. You know, if you have constructive information to give me, I want it. You know, I'm an academic. I have an innate tendency to delve into things like this. If I say, "Hey, I've forgotten all these references. Hey, you should have done this." or "Your sentence is bad here." I like that. But if you're the kind of person who doesn't have an opinion, doesn't share their opinion, and only talks about how I can improve my performance, I'm not interested in your opinion at all.

Flashcards

Q1: Who is the author of the "Man in the Arena" speech from which the text was quoted?

A1: U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt.

Q2: What is the main idea of the paragraph quoted from Roosevelt's speech?

A2: True appreciation belongs to the person who actively participates and takes risks, not to the one who merely criticizes from a distance.

Q3: According to the speaker, what is the only guarantee when showing up and creating in life?

A3: Being inevitably exposed to a crushing defeat.

Q4: What new philosophy did the speaker adopt toward criticism?

A4: If the critic is not also in the arena and exposed to defeat, she is not interested in their opinion.

Q5: How did the speaker connect the concept of vulnerability to the quotation?

A5: She saw that vulnerability is not about winning or losing, but about having the courage to show up and participate actively.

Q6: What are the two things the speaker wants to do in her life?

A6: Create and make new things that did not exist before her touch.

Q7: How does the speaker respond to constructive academic criticism?

A7: She welcomes it and enjoys engaging with it because it helps her improve her work.

Q8: How does she react when someone offers criticism without actually participating?

A8: She declares that she is not interested in their opinion at all.

Q9: What effect did reading the quotation have on the speaker?

A9: It changed her life, liberated her, and made her braver.

Q10: Why did the speaker search for the name of the President of the United States while watching "Downton Abbey"?

A10: Out of curiosity after becoming immersed in the series and wanting to understand the historical context.

Insight

- 01** God does not call you to assess the arena, but to leap into it; showing up is courage.
- 02** Those who hide behind comments do not know the taste of grace; choose to taste the glory of trying.
- 03** Even if you stumble and fall, the Lord lifts you up, because failure is not the finale.
- 04** The critics' voices are loud, but your whisper with God is louder; listen to the quiet truth.
- 05** There is no guarantee in the arena except bleeding and grace together; accept both and embrace the power of brokenness.
- 06** When you create something new, you reflect the image of the Creator; your creativity is practical worship.
- 07** You embraced the cross, and shame became glory; walk the same path and let boldness be sanctified.