

Part 1. Leading with love & Part 2. Armored vs. Daring Leadership

Created by Bethel Tsegaye for [Calling In & Up](#)

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Description:

This is a two-part session that grounds participants in what it means to lead from a place of love and wholeheartedness.

Part 1, *Leading with love* offers some grounding in the concept of love and invites participants to reflect on love in relationship to their leadership and the way their organizations lead. It engages participants through frameworks offered from scholars such as bell hooks.

Part 2, *Armored vs. Daring Leadership* explores leadership behaviors through concepts borrowed from Brené Brown's work, *Dare to Lead*. It examines leadership behaviors that are practiced across the spectrum of Armored and Daring leadership behaviors. The session helps participants understand how our environment impacts our behaviors and choices as leaders through the lens of internalized oppression and engages participants through reflection on how to identify their own leadership behaviors across the spectrum. Participants are invited to develop practices that shift armored behaviors towards daring ones through the lens offered in part 1, *Leading with love*.



about the session

Purpose: To ground participants in what it means to lead from a place of love, to recognize armored leadership behaviors and shift to more daring leadership behaviors as women of color leaders.

Outcomes:

- Participants understand what a love ethic is
- Participants understand what gets in the way of leading with love and what they and their organizations need to lead with love
- Participants are grounded in concepts of armored and daring leadership behaviors.
- Participants begin to recognize armored v daring leadership behaviors in themselves.
- Participants begin to develop practices to help shift armored behaviors to daring behaviors.

Process: 165 min with 6 -25 people

We recommend creating as much space for this conversation as possible. You could do Parts 1 and 2 together in a full day or hold parts 1 and 2 as individual half days.

Component	Time Needed
Part 1: Leading with love	75 minutes
Part 2: Armored vs. Daring Leadership	90 minutes

Connection to [Vertical Development](#):

- **Awaken:** Explore leading from love, enhancing self-awareness from their own leadership styles and the impact of love on their practices and organizational values through reflection.
- **Unlearn/Discern:** Participants unlearn patterns influenced by internalized oppression and discern which behaviors support their growth.
- **Advance:** Develop strategies that shift from armored to daring behaviors and implement new strategies that enhance their leadership

How to Integrate Into Agenda/Program...

- We recommend that facilitators hold this session once some group trust is built.
- Consider doing this session at the beginning of a leadership transition (especially to POC leadership), as that can be a prime moment to introduce new ways of leading
- Make sure to set the container - it's important to create a [liberated zone](#) before facilitating this session with the group. This will help folks lean into liberated practices as folks are reflecting and sharing their experiences. It is also a great way to model "leading with love"
- If you're using the Calling In & Up curriculum, it's also helpful to do this *after* facilitating:
 - Building Power and Transformative Organizing (at least the Intro)

- Introducing the concept of interdependence - While this session is focused on the self, it will tie nicely to the practice of interdependence as a new way to lead that is rooted in collaboration and dismantling internalized oppression.
- Immunity to Change - Immunity to Change helps folks ground in the process of change as they reflect on where they may need to move along the spectrum of armored to daring leadership.

facilitator preparation

First check out the “How to Integrate Into Agenda/Program” section above.

Designed for in-person or virtual facilitation

For more on moving sessions online, check out [Dynamic Meetings from Training for Change](#), [Training for Change tools for online facilitation](#).

Preparation:

Ground yourself in the concept of “leading with love” through the notes below and:

- Read [“Love as a practice of freedom”](#) by bell hooks.
- Read [“Love as Social Order”](#) by Cyndi Suarez
- Listen to Armored Versus Daring Leadership podcasts Part [1](#) & [2](#) by Brene Brown
- Review Brene Brown’s [Dare to Lead Read-Along Workbook](#) section on Armored v Daring Leadership (pgs: 15-17)
- Review and complete the worksheets in the [reflection packet](#).
- Prepare some examples of how they show up for you to share with the group. This is a great way to practice and model vulnerability.
- Read Brene Brown’s [Dare to Lead book](#) pgs 78-113. This section breaks down what each of the leadership behaviors mean.

Materials:

- Leading with love [slides](#)
- Armored v daring [slides](#)
- Armored V Daring Leadership List [1](#) & [2](#)
- [Reflection Packet](#)

How to keep this session fresh and relevant?

Research recent discourse and leaders using a love ethic in organizing strategy and works to include in the grounding and political education.

Part 1: Leading with Love (75 min)

Pre-Reading

- Read [“Love as a practice of freedom”](#) by bell hooks
- Read [“Love as Social Order”](#) by Cyndi Suarez
- Listen to Armored Versus Daring Leadership Podcasts Part [1](#) & [2](#)

Introduction/Welcome & Framing (15 min)

- Welcome participants
- Offer care and encourage openness:
 - Before we dive in, we want to invite folks take care of yourselves and each other- this is a great time to practice your liberated zone (or other agreements you have made about how to be in community with each other)
 - Also want to invite some lightheartedness into this conversation - a conversation which may at times feel serious because it invites you into self reflection and curiosity about your leadership
 - Bring a spirit of joy and grace for ourselves and each other and as you discover things about yourself, greet them with love and kindness
 - Congratulate yourself for being here and willing to lean into this work. You are making a commitment to your growth and growth is not a linear process, it can feel messy, but out of that comes great wisdom, new perspectives and new skills.
 - Share a personal story of growth
 - *Example: “I’m always learning new things about myself through this work and I used to be really hard on myself when I would discover something I hadn’t seen sooner, especially when it was a “bad” practice that I may have been doing. For example, it took me burning out two times in the span of 5 years to realize I had some serious problems around my relationship to work and productivity that comes from my family and what I was taught as a first generation immigrant who was always taught to keep my head down and work hard and that gratitude should come at the cost of my body, my health. This was a big revelation for me, and at first I didn’t know how to re-enter the work. How to redefine my relationship to it took a lot of self awareness, political education and understanding of who I wanted to be as a leader, for myself, for my family, and my community”*
- Why this workshop?
 - As women of color leaders we face the ever present challenge of operating within a larger set of systems and institutions that are mired in capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy
 - These systems have profoundly impacted the way we have learned to lead
 - We often operate in systems that reward harmful or “armored” behaviors and we often wear this armor to survive and “make it” in these systems
 - But when we wear armor, we are forced to disconnect from our true selves, from our hearts. And our selves and our hearts are two important sources for our strategic imagination.

- Liberation cannot be achieved through the same means as oppression. We cannot lead in the same ways our oppressors have and continue to do so if we want to have a world that is safe for everyone
- And so in effort to reconnect with our hearts and lead from a place of love, we will further explore what it means to embody love as women of color leaders and examine how and what armored behaviors might be showing up for us and what we can do to lean into “daring” behaviors that are rooted in love and liberation.
- Through this workshop, we’ve seen leaders and teams recognize behaviors that contribute to toxic work cultures and get curious about how to call in and change behaviors to healthier ones that promote happier, human centered environments where individuals, teams and orgs can thrive
- Begin Slides [SLIDE 1](#)
- Review POP: [SLIDE 2](#)
 - Purpose: To ground participants in what it means to lead from a place of love.
 - Outcomes: Participants understand what a love ethic is, Participants understand what get in the way of leading with love and what they and their organizations need to lead with love

Love Introduction (15 minutes)

- Let’s talk a little about love
- How often do we get to talk about love or understand how to be more loving in the context of our work?
- When we hear the word love, we often think about it in specific ways, and specific areas of our lives.

→ Ask participants: What do you think about when you hear the word love?

- Summarize back what you hear.
- Often we might think about the people in our lives that we love, or care for the most, our partners and kids, friends, our communities, our people.
- Invite someone to read the quote on [SLIDE 3](#)
 - *“In this society, there is no powerful discourse on love emerging either from politically progressive radicals or from the left. The absence of a sustained focus on love in progressive circles arises from a collective failure to acknowledge the needs of the spirit and an overdetermined emphasis on material conditions. Without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed.” bell hooks, Love as the Practice of Freedom*
- There’s so much that we as leaders in our respective work think that can be solved by strategies, programs, campaigns etc alone, but if love - or a “love ethic” as Hooks explains is not what is driving us we risk being the very thing from which we are trying to liberate ourselves
- For example: in her article, hooks talks about the “powerful visionary black male leaders who can speak and act passionately in resistance to racial domination and accept and embrace sexist domination of women, by feminist white women who work daily to eradicate sexism but who have major gaps in understanding when it comes to

acknowledging and resisting racism and white supremacist domination of the planet.”[SLIDE 4](#)

- These gaps in understanding hooks refer to are examples of how we internalize racism and sexism because we are conditioned by the systems and society we live in. Explain internalized oppression [SLIDE 5](#)
- Ask participants: Can you think of any examples of gaps in understanding you see in your work? [SLIDE 6](#)
- Our society, culture and institutions in the American West often ask us to show up this way and reward it rather than inviting us to show up with our full selves, with our hearts.
- Cyndi Suarez talks about how “if we don’t consider what drives our work, we may inadvertently be driven by fear or rage” in her article “*Love as a Social Order*”
- *Bring in personal anecdote about your own convictions to lead with love and to help others to do the same*
- Love calls you into a different type of commitment - it's about doing the work inside and of the collective -(hand over heart)
- Ask a participant to read quote “The ability to acknowledge blind spots can emerge only as we expand our concern about the politics of domination and our capacity to care about the oppression and exploitation of others. A love ethic makes this expansion possible.” By bell hooks [SLIDE 7](#)
- The writings of scholars and institutions such as hooks, MLK, Thich Nhat Hanh, James Baldwin, and spiritual teachings are great sources to help us as we try to understand what it means to know ourselves and lead with wholeheartedness
- Today so many leaders, organizers and institutions are trying to advance this love ethic to change our movements such as the Othering & Belonging Institute, adrienne marie brown, Prentis Hemphill & The Embodiment Institute among others
- Closing Quote “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”— Cornel West [SLIDE 8](#)

Individual Reflection (20 minutes)

- Share the 1st worksheet in the [reflection packet](#), titled “Leading from a place of love” with participants
- Walk through the instructions and the prompts and provide examples for each
- Seek any clarification if needed from participants
- Invite participants to make a copy of the document if shared virtually
- Invite participants to silently reflect on the answers and write them out. If the training is taking place in person you can ask participants to find a comfortable corner in the space you are in. You can play some light instrumental music during this time.
- If the training is taking place virtually, you can play light instrumental music during this time and let folks know they can go off camera if they like and find a comfortable spot in their homes or wherever they are.

Pair Share (10 minutes)

- Put participants into pairs and have them share their reflections with each other

Group Reflection & Discussion (15 minutes)

- Ask participants:

- What was this like for you?
- What came up for you?
- Was there anything surprising?
- What feels most possible when you think of leading with love? When you think of your organization leading with love?
- Read closing quote: [SLIDE 9](#)
 - “Choosing love we also choose to live in community, and that means that we do not have to change by ourselves.” ~hooks

Part 2: Armored vs. Daring Leadership (90 min)

Armored v Daring Leadership Introduction (25 min)

- We hope through this session that we can encourage a form of leadership that asks you to fully commit to loving yourself and the people you are working with and serving
- Ask someone to read the quote on [SLIDE 2](#)
 - *“Wholeheartedness captures the essence of a fully examined emotional life and a liberated heart one that is free and vulnerable enough to be loved” Brene Brown*
- She talks about how many organizations believe that if we sever the heart (vulnerability and other emotions) from our work, we'll be more productive, efficient and easier to manage - or at the least less messy - (basically not human). But these ideas lead us to create a culture that requires us to put on armor and rewards it.
- We're going to lean into some work around what it looks like to carry this armor as leaders and what it looks like when we're not, when we are choosing to be courageous or daring.
- Introduce Brene Brown - she is a researcher, storyteller, who's spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She has published a couple of amazing books on these topics and an incredible book with Tarana Burke - *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience and the Black Experience: An anthology*.
- If folks are getting a copy of Dare to Lead - let them know. If not, suggest the book for further reading and exploration on armored v daring leadership.
- Why we are using her work - There are a lot of incredible Black, Brown, white indigenous leaders that we learn, lean on and reference throughout our curriculum that inform our work.
- Brene Brown's work on armored v daring leadership is one that we lean on for its detail and simplicity for providing an understanding and an in depth framework for distinguishing between leadership behaviors that internalize harmful practices from systems of oppression and leadership behaviors that are rooted in love and liberation

Armored Leadership

- Ask a participant to read the definition of Armored Leadership on [SLIDE 3](#)
 - *Armored leadership is a form of leadership that is practiced through thoughts, emotions, behaviors that we use to protect us from vulnerability.*
- Examples of this are: [SLIDE 3](#)
 - EXAMPLE 1: Operating from a scarcity mindset and squandering opportunities for joy and recognition (resource scarcity, doing less because you have less, or you think you

only have access to limited resources, working under pressure and false sense of urgency - we don't think there's time for celebrating wins, celebrating each other, to have fun, and to believe that joy is also possible and necessary when we work)

- How many of you have had something great happen to you, or you got some good news either at work or in your personal life? For a brief second you're so excited about the thing, you're calling your partner, your friends and then immediately after, you start thinking about all the work that needs to be done to maintain the good news or get to another level, or you start panicking about when something bad is going to happen to you. Give example
 - EXAMPLE 2: Using criticism as self protection (sometimes we might see or bring criticism to an idea or program as a way to evade taking risks or even doing the work - making a contribution - because we are afraid to try something different or something new, to be open, to "fail" and learn, especially when we have been taught to do things in a certain way and we get comfortable. Not saying criticism is bad, in fact criticism when constructive is a great quality of a courageous leader, but the key here is that it's constructive and offers a solution v being used as a way to take someone down and avoid vulnerability.
- Now, Armor isn't a bad thing, often we put on armor as a survival mechanism, because of systems like capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy among others that favor certain behaviors and characteristics in the workplace. Moreover, the culture of competition and pitting people against each other makes us feel that in order to make it we must succeed according to the rules of white dominant work culture,
- For example, another armored leadership behavior is "Rewarding exhaustion as a status symbol and attaching productivity to self-worth"
- Most of us are probably all too familiar with moving in such a way in our work where productivity is the end goal and where we will do and ask others to do what's necessary to achieve that, often thinking only about the end result and not the process to get there
- Take a moment to reflect on whether this might be something you have done or do, or if you have been in spaces where this is true.
 - ➔ Ask the group: What is it like to experience this?
- Reflect on answers with the group. Acknowledge that this might be hard for folks, especially in a culture where burnout rates for women of color are really high.
- Note that this practice is an intentional product of capitalism which seeks to create workhorses to serve in effort to reach a particular goal - which for non profits and the movement are often driven by white dominant expectations of success, linked to funding expectations, very political in nature and often are not goals that are meant to disrupt and transform systems but to uphold them.
- If you live or work in the American West you have probably experienced this because of how we internalize oppression as people who experience or have been conditioned through white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, ableism, classism, other forms of oppression that condition not only us, but our institutions, organizations and that has an impact on how we show up as leaders
- What happens to us, when we are conditioned in a society that is inherently racist and sexist, exclusionary?

- Well those things run through us too right, there's so much learned behavior both in how we think and and how we act that embodies sometimes the harmful ideologies behind systems of oppression like racism and sexism, ableism, capitalism
- These ideas also get baked into our work, our institutions, our buildings, and typically serve those who benefit most from white supremacy - namely white cis gendered men and women
- Next, let's look into what it could look and feel like to practice healthy and liberatory or daring leadership

Daring Leadership

- Ask a participant to read the definition of Daring leadership on [SLIDE 4](#)
 - *Daring leadership is a form of leadership that is practiced through thoughts, emotions, behaviors that we use to lean into vulnerability, live into our values, brave trust and learn to rise.*
- Examples of this include: [SLIDE 4](#)
 - Practicing gratitude and celebrating milestones and victories: Taking the time to grateful for each other and actually expressing it through words, actions, celebrating each other not just for productivity but for who we are and how we show up, celebrate small and big! Give personal examples if you have
 - Using power with, power to and power within: I love this one, because we talk about building power so much in the movement and I think it's worth getting curious about what type of power we are actually talking about. Traditional notions of power and how we see power manifested are through power OVER, right a form of domination. But in daring leadership, we are invited to use
 - *power with* - finding common ground to build collective strength, focuses on multiplying individual talents and resources to make larger impact - no one left behind
 - *Power to*, giving folks you work with on your team agency and acknowledging unique potential to make a difference
 - *Power within*, is really about going inwards, respecting differences, having strong self worth and knowledge and being confident enough to challenge status quo, believe that another way is possible

(Good place to reference [Building Power & Transformative Organizing \(Power & Love\)](#) session if applicable.)

- Ask a participant to read Quote on [SLIDE 5](#)
 - “ In the same way we depend on our physical heart to pump blood and keep us alive, we depend on the emotional heart to keep vulnerability through the veins of courage - this is necessary for building things like real trust, connection, innovation, creativity and accountability” Brene Brown
- Pause for questions

Individual Reflection (5 min)

- Individual: Ask the group to take 5 minutes to journal: [SLIDE 6](#)

- What is coming for you around armored v daring leadership? Notice when tensions or triggers might be coming up.
- What are you curious about?
- Where do you need clarity?

Peer Reflection (15 min) [SLIDE 7](#)

- Put participants in pairs to reflect on what's coming up for them and their journal answers

Group reflection (15 min) [SLIDE 8](#)

- Ask participants to share what came up in their discussion.
- Did they get clarity from each other?
- What clarity is still needed?

Pair Practice (20 min)

- Share the Armored v Daring Checklists [1](#) & [2](#)
- Have participants take a few minutes to review the lists silently once in their pairs
- Next, have participants discuss any concepts together that might need some clarification
- If they have access to the book, you can refer them to Pgs. 78-113 to read up on explanation of concepts
- Take turns answering the following questions:
 - Which armored behaviors stand out to you? Why?
 - Which daring behaviors stand out to you? Why?
 - Spend some time reflecting through discussion on the differences on the spectrum of armored v daring leadership behaviors of the ones that stand out.
 - What are some cultural norms that influence these behaviors? For example, what are the norms that reward these armored behaviors?
 - How does love as a practice show up in daring v armored behaviors?

Group Reflection (15 min)

- Once participants return from breakouts to the whole group: Invite them into a few deep breaths
- Ask a few participants to share what came up for them and invite the group into discussion

Individual practice (15 min)

- Share [Worksheet](#) with participants
- Walk through instructions, questions and sample answers
- Ask if anyone has questions, provide clarity where needed
- Invite participants to spend 10 minutes beginning to fill in the answers
- This worksheet is intended to be used for continued practice so folks do not have to complete it but begin to build a muscle around getting curious with themselves

Close (10 min):

- Bring folks back to the whole group and thank them for being brave and showing up with curiosity and love

- End on Quote from hooks “Awareness is central to the process of love as the practice of freedom. Whenever those of us who are members of exploited and oppressed groups dare to critically interrogate our locations, the identities and allegiances that inform how we live our lives, we begin the process of decolonization. If we discover in ourselves self-hatred, low self-esteem, or internalized white supremacist thinking and we face it, we can begin to heal.” [SLIDE 9](#)

related resources from Calling In & Up

- [Building Power & Transformative Organizing \(Power & Love\)](#)
- Liberated Container
- Generative conflict

attribution

Created by Bethel Tsegaye, as part of [Calling In & Up](#)

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Our work continues to be a living document for women identified people of color and their comrades. We welcome you to use this work widely, share it freely, and attribute the people who shaped this work. As you adapt this session guide for your own, please:

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