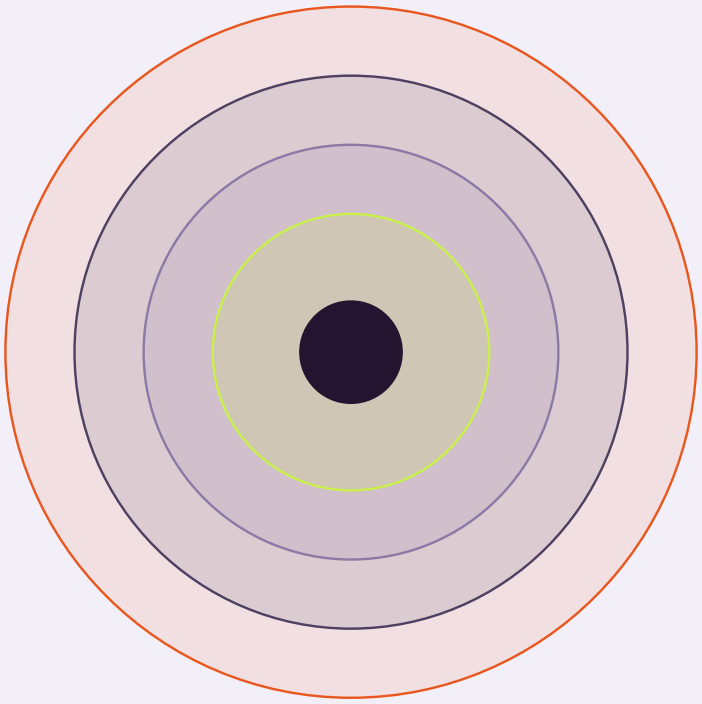


Strong Ground: The Lessons of Daring Leader-ship, the Tenacity of Paradox, and

the Wisdom of the Human Spirit

A reading of the book by Brené Brown (2025)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Strong Ground: The Lessons of Daring Leadership, the Tenacity of Paradox, and the Wisdom of the Human Spirit, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Brené Brown is a research professor known for her work on courage, vulnerability and shame, and the author of Dare to Lead. Strong Ground is the second book in that leadership series, written for a time of fast change, polarised politics and worn-out teams. She argues that leaders can be both high-performing and humane, and that the capacities change asks for are the human ones we practise least. The title comes from an athletic stance, a phrase from her physical therapist while she recovered from an injury, which she turns into a picture of steady footing that still lets you move fast. The book works through hard conversations, productive urgency, strategic risk, unlearning and, above all, holding paradox. It mixes her own stories and the Dare to Lead work with chapters on other people, including Adam Grant, Abby Wambach and Ginny Clarke, plus poems by David Whyte and Clint Smith.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Strong ground is a stance you take, not a mood you wait for.

The phrase came from Brown's physical therapist, while she recovered from a pickleball injury. She turned it into a cue for hard moments: steady yourself before you act. Footing comes first, and the courage follows from it.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Steady and fast are not opposites; good footing is what lets you move quickly.

An athlete in a solid stance can change direction faster than one who is off balance. Brown applies the same idea to leaders in a turbulent year. Being grounded is not standing still. It is what makes quick, clear change possible without falling over.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A paradox is a tension to hold, not a problem to solve.

Many leaders treat two competing truths as a choice to make once and then forget. Brown argues that the hard ones, such as confidence and humility, never get settled. The skill is staying in the tension long enough to act well, and noticing which way you are leaning this week.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You do not have to pick between high performance and treating people well.

A core claim of the book is that strong results and humane leadership can live in the same team. Brown pushes back on the belief that care makes people soft or that standards make a leader cold. Clear expectations and real care each make the other easier.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Admitting you do not know yet takes more courage than faking an answer.

One chapter is about negative capability, the poet John Keats's name for staying with uncertainty without grabbing at a quick answer. For a leader, that can mean saying you need more time or asking the room to slow a decision down. Brown treats this as strength, not weakness.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Unlearning is the hardest skill on the list, because it needs humility and confidence at once.

Letting go of what made you successful is harder than picking up something new. The book includes Adam Grant's work on actively looking for the reasons you might be wrong. Unlearning asks you to be humble enough to doubt yourself and confident enough to change in public.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Urgency helps when it focuses a team and hurts when it turns frantic.

Brown calls for productive urgency and smart prioritising rather than reactivity. In HourLife's reading, productive urgency comes with clear priorities and a reason. Reactive urgency makes every task a fire, spreads stress and leaves the important work undone.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Feel the pressure closing in, and keep your position anyway.

Brown borrows pocket presence from American football: a quarterback senses the rush around them and stays calm long enough to make the throw. She brings it into meetings and boardrooms. Sensing pressure is useful. Running from it too early is not.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Protecting what is human at work is a leader's job, not a side project.

Brown writes with AI and constant change in the background. Her measured view is that the capacities change asks for, such as connection, judgment and courage, are human ones we are not yet practising well. Leaders have to make room for them on purpose.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Pick your strong-ground cue
- [ ] Name the tensions your role asks you to hold
- [ ] Write a might-be-wrong list
- [ ] Sort your decisions by speed
- [ ] Choose one thing to unlearn

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Take your stance before hard conversations
- ◯ Check your lean every week
- ◯ Say you do not know yet

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Pick your strong-ground cue

Choose one physical cue you can use anywhere, such as feet flat on the floor, knees soft and one slow breath.

Write it on a card or in your phone so it is there before your next hard meeting.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Name the tensions your role asks you to hold

Write down two or three pairs that are both true in your job, such as speed and care or structure and freedom.

Next to each, note which side you lean towards when you are tired.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Write a might-be-wrong list

List three beliefs about your work that you rely on.

For each, write the evidence that would change your mind, and one person who sees it differently.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Sort your decisions by speed

Go through the open decisions on your plate.

Mark which ones need a call this week and which deserve a deliberate pause, and tell the people waiting which is which.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Choose one thing to unlearn

Pick one habit that helped you get where you are but now gets in the way, such as answering every question yourself.

Tell one colleague and ask them to point it out when it shows up.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Take your stance before hard conversations

Before a difficult call or meeting, spend thirty seconds on your cue.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Check your lean every week

On Friday, look at your tensions and mark where you leaned this week.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Say you do not know yet

Once a week, when you are unsure, say so out loud and say what you will do to find out.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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30 ○						

December 2026

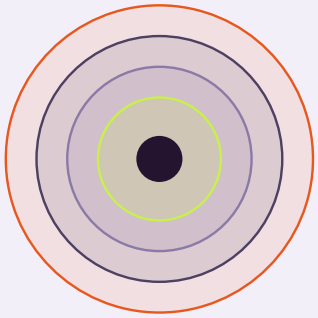
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28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Plant your feet first. Then you can hold two true things at once and still move when the ground shifts.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER BRENÉ BROWN

Read it online, and vote on the take-aways: hourlife.com/books/strong-ground

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