



Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change and Thrive in Work and Life

Susan David

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No.1 *Wall Street Journal* bestseller

USA Today bestseller

Amazon.com Best Book of the Year

Every day we speak around 16,000 words - but inside minds we create tens of thousands more. Thoughts such as 'I'm not spending enough time with my children' or 'I'm not good enough to present my work' can seem to be unshakable facts. In reality, they're the judgemental opinions of our inner voice.

Drawing on more than twenty years of academic research, consulting, and her own experiences overcoming adversity, Susan David PhD, a psychologist and faculty member at Harvard Medical School, has pioneered a new way to enable us to make peace with our inner self, achieve our most valued goals, make real change, and live life to the fullest.

Susan David has found that emotionally agile people experience the same stresses and setbacks as anyone else. The difference is the emotionally agile know how to unhook themselves from unhelpful patterns, and how to create values-based success with better habits and behaviours.

Emotional Agility describes a new way of living and relating to yourself and the world around you. Become aware of your true nature, learn to face your emotions with acceptance and generosity, act according to your deepest values, and flourish.

Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change and Thrive in Work and Life Details

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Author : Susan David

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From Reader Review Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change and Thrive in Work and Life for online ebook

Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

This review and others can be found on BW Book Reviews.

Self-help books aren't always my thing. Like, they're good and have truth, but they're so watered down and oversimplified that I don't know if they could ever work without someone putting a lot of effort into it. However, this one wasn't like that. Watered down, yes, but relatively simple to tackle.

The strategy that Susan David has come up with is, to me, like a watered down Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT). REBT is a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy created by Albert Ellis. First, you focus on something that happens and your beliefs about it. Either it can be rational or irrational. The whole thing with REBT is to stop irrational thinking by thinking about your emotions and disputing them with different strategies.

Emotional agility is, in a sense, like that. You focus on your emotions and you rationalize them. You realize that they're important for some reason, so accept them and then find a way to use them to help you. That's the whole premise of David's idea and it's something I can get behind completely.

There are four main ideas to this that I caught. First, you have to feel your feelings. Don't bottle them up or ruminate. Feel them, and then let go. Second, stress is okay. It's healthy to feel stressed. Be whelmed, not overwhelmed. Third, and this is the biggest part of the book, is walking your why. What David means by that is to figure out what you want to do with your life. Find your values and do things that match them. Fourth, don't overpraise kids. And fifth, allow children autonomy so they can figure things out themselves emotionally. Otherwise, you get the coddled kids who can't handle real life.

My mom actually raised me in this way, so I know how important it is to feel your feelings and to accept stress and to do what is right for you. It's healthy and the ways that David talks about these are very realistic. She didn't propose any complete overhauls of systems we have in place but just talked about how you can do this in your own life. Doesn't matter about changing other people, just work on yourself and find a way to accept your "negative" emotions.

Hamed Al-Hamdan says

Brilliant! Tired of reading the typical psychology books!? This is different. It's more in line with our fast phased life. The next thing after Emotional Intelligence. The author crafted her thoughts through well selected real life vivid examples which makes it easier to grasp. An essential read to manage through change. Learn how to embrace negativity and move forward. I found it energizing!

Donna says

This was just okay for me. It felt too long and I didn't care for the delivery. There were some nuggets of

gold, but they were buried so deep in rhetoric and drama....I wasn't sure this was working for me. I listened to the audio and that is where I went wrong. I should have read the pages. The audio is what was annoying me and it colored my feelings of this.

Randall Jackson says

I'll admit that I had to read this book twice before I was able to understand the practical application of it's information. The book has a wealth of scientific study to support the claims that are made. It is good that the author choose to do this even as I am one who does like to be provided proof or evidence to support statements that are claimed to be effectual.

In this book the supporting studies did tend to cloud or make unclear how to practically apply the methods discussed in real time real life situations. I had to dig past the studies attempting to keep the practical methods to be used to become more emotional agile in the forefront. Once I got through the studies or case evidence I outlined the intended way the author suggested that the book be used to help become more emotionally agile.

I really didn't receive anything that I didn't already know. But what I did receive was a way in which to make the information of the book applicable to my individual behavior. I recommend that persons interested in emotional responses and how to better deal with them do take the time to read if not at least survey this book. It has already proven to be helpful to me in real situations in a short matter of time.

Anders Brabaek says

Read Susan Davids article "Emotional Agility" on Harward Business Review first and then maybe the book. You can find the the article here:

<https://hbr.org/2013/11/emotional-agility>...

The article above was Susan's foundation for the book. In the article, the ideas of the book are delivered more concise. By reading the article first, I think you will have a frame for the book, or know if you want to read the book at all.

The primary idea in the book is that we get hugged on our thoughts and emotions, and that this spills into actions and other self-concepts which is detrimental to us, and the people around us. According to Susan D. we need to acknowledge our thoughts and emotions, label and accept them, and ensure that they are aligned with our values.

This resonates with me. However, the book is mostly unsuccessful and vague in delivering prescriptions as how to apply these ideas in practice. Instead Susan D. elaborate on the evidence for the argument put forward in the article spiced supporting stories. "The evidence" in this case is based on experimental psychology. If you have read the usual books in this genre you will recognize most or even all of the experiments.

While I believe that the leaps Susan David is making from "the evidence" to the idea is fundamentally correct, she is covering huge ground with nothing but correlational data. Likewise, it seems clear that she is going from "the idea" to a search for experimental data which supports it, and she never really ties the ends well together. "Emotional Agility" was heralded by Harvard Business Review as the most groundbreaking idea of the Year. This is odd; except the phrase "Emotional Agility", the idea really is not new. It is a

repackaging of core ideas from existential and humanistic psychology brushed up with more recent positive psychology. Anyone who is acquainted with these ideas should find nothing new.

However, I think that combining and repackaging these ideas to make them more actionable is a good idea. Unfortunately, she never really succeeds at that, and I am left with the sense that she could have done a better job – and I hope she will make another try.

Books in the same vein;

Though the subject matter is slightly different, the book has several similarities with Kelly McGonigal's "The Upside of Stress".

Obviously the subject matter has strong ties to "Emotional intelligence", and "Social intelligence" as described by Daniel Goleman - though Goleman's writing style is different.

Sarah says

IMHO, this book gets so much right, and it really rings true. For people who do not read self-help books, it is not written like a typical self-help book and I think you could tolerate it much better. Great insights that are thought-provoking. Recommended.

Laurie Anderson says

There were a few good nuggets of wisdom, but I much prefer the research and writing of Brene Brown.

Frank Calberg says

Extracts I found particularly useful:

What emotions do we have?

- Location 550: We have 7 basic emotions. They are divided in 2 groups: Positive emotions and negative emotions. Joy and surprise are positive emotions. Sadness, fear, contempt, disgust, and surprise are negative emotions. Notice that surprise can be a positive and a negative emotion.
- Location 2200: Fear sometimes appears in disguise, for example when we postpone things, when we seek perfection, when we have low confidence and/or when we make excuses. Fear speaks only one word: No. Examples: No, I will just fail. No, I don't know anyone there. No, that shirt will look awful on me. No, I would rather wait. No, I prefer to avoid that.

Additional research on positive and negative emotions:

<https://www.slideshare.net/frankcalbe...>

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How do we accept what we are feeling?

- Location 450: Respond to the world as it is right now.
- Location 550: Approach new experiences with the beginner's mind.

- Location 900: Stop fighting what is. Accept it. Acceptance means giving permission for the world to be as it is. Only when you stop trying to control the universe can you make peace with it.
- Location 900: To accept yourself in periods of strong change such as divorce or loss of income, look back at the child you once were. In this regard, keep in mind that you have not chosen your parents. However, you have survived until now. Accept where you come from, accept how you grew up, accept your personality. Show yourself warmth, kindness, and forgiveness.
- Location 1000: Avoid comparing yourself to others. Instead, keep your eyes on your own work. Become who you are. People, who spend the least amount of time comparing themselves to others in terms of looks, intelligence or money also report the least amount of self-blaming, guilt and regret. When you compare yourself to others, you get hooked on external validation.
- Location 1100: Give yourself permission to experience what you are feeling. Example: If you are sad and disappointed, allow yourself to feel sad and disappointed. Learn about the reasons why you are sad and disappointed. Express it. A baby does not know which words to use to express emotions. We do.

How do we express emotions?

- Location 50: When you see / hear / feel, for example, signs of danger or hints of romance, i.e. cues that you are being rejected or accepted by other people, your heart will beat slower or faster, and your muscles will tighten or relax.
- Location 1100: Sometimes, when people cannot express their emotions using words, the only emotion that comes through is anger.

What questions can we ask to help people express emotions they have

- Location 700: How do you feel? How did you feel in that situation? We tend to ask girls this question. On the contrary, we are more likely to ask boys about tasks. Example: What did you do today? We need to start also asking boys how they feel?
- Location 1350: Question 1: Ask each person in a group to write on a sticky note the biggest fear they have about themselves. Example: "I am afraid of being in big groups." Question 2: Put on some music. Ask people to put the sticky note on their chest and to go introduce themselves to others. Example: "Hi, I'm afraid of being in big groups." The exercise helps people to create more space to be themselves and tame their fears.
- Location 1500: Identifying and acting on values that are truly your own is an important step in achieving emotional agility. Questions to discover values:

<http://www.slideshare.net/frankcalber...>

- Location 2450: If you were going to die this evening, what would you most regret not having said?
- Location 3000: When parents let children know that they do not judge them, they signal that they accept their emotions. Thereby, parents also help children to calm down and not feel neither fear, shame or guilt. Instead of trying to fix things quickly, parents are better off simply pausing and listening. When a child feels fully seen and acknowledged by those around him, he / she will feel loved and secure. When a child feels loved and secure - and not rejected, punished or shamed for feeling what he / she feels - he / she will feel free to live with any emotions. For example, when a child feels shame, he / she will feel free to live with that feeling, understand where it comes from and why it is there.
- Location 3000 - 3200: To encourage autonomy in a child, try these 2 things: # 1: Honour the child for who he / she is, for example someone who loves to sing. Avoid honouring the child for who you wish him or her to be, for example a sergeant in the military. # 2: Do a brainstorm with the child. When you support a child in finding solutions on his / her own, the child will develop autonomy.
- Location 3100: To help a child understand the value of telling the truth, it helps that a parent explains WHY he / she wants the child to do something, when he / she asks the child to do something.
- Location 3150: If a child has difficulty making friends, you can ask, "Where are good places to start connecting with people?"
- Additional research on expressing emotions: <https://www.slideshare.net/frankcalbe...>

What are advantages of expressing real emotions?

- Location 700: In a study of how real people's smiles on photos are, researchers found that true smilers had more satisfying marriages, greater feelings of well-being and were more content.
- Location 700: Positive emotions help us make better decisions, help us direct our attention to new opportunities and help us reduce the risk of diseases.
- Location 1100: People, who can identify the full spectrum of emotions, do much better at handling ups and downs in life.
- Location 1150: People, who write about emotionally charged episodes in their lives, experience an increase in their physical and mental wellbeing.
- Location 1200: Applying words to emotions is a helpful way to deal with stress, anxiety, and loss.
- Location 3100: When kids are guided towards learning and trusting their values, they discover their whys, their want-to motivations.

What disadvantages are there of putting too much focus on positive feelings?

- Location 750: When we are in an "everything is awesome" mood, we are far more likely to jump to conclusions. Happy people often place disproportionate emphasis on early information and disregard later details.
- Location 750: Placing too much value on happiness increases people's expectations for how things should be and thereby set people up for disappointment. A study also shows that the more people have happiness as a goal, the more they describe themselves as lonely.

How can we avoid letting emotions guide decisionmaking?

- Location 1400: Example: You are in doubt of whether to continue living in city A or moving to live in city B. To avoid letting emotions guide decisionmaking, ask yourself in the third person. "What is better for (your name)?"
- Location 2700: When you are feeling stress, say "I notice I am feeling stress" instead of "I am stressed." Thereby, you create a space between yourself and the feeling you feel at that moment.

How do emotions of others influence our emotions?

Location 400: Research among nurse teams shows that one nurse's mood - on any given day - was significantly predicted by the mood of the other nurses on the team. Other research shows that just seeing a person, who is stressed, can increase the observer's own stress.

Taryn Pennington says

Listen to the audiobook and then ended up buying the hard copy so I could go back and make notes. Very insightful. Lots of tips on how to it only recognize the emotions we deal with but also how to deal with them properly so they don't consume your life.

Dreaday says

This book had a profound impact on my day-to-day life. When I notice myself getting frustrated, I am reminded of this book. Specifically the passage in which the author describes how people can die in fires: due to their panic, people see the way they came in as the only way out, even if there is another way. According to Dr. David, this is a type of "tape" we play in our heads. These "tapes" usually serve us well (the

way to get out of a place is the same way we came in), but can cause tragedies if we play them in situations that don't call for them. Emotional Agility is all about identifying our tapes and making sure we pick (or create!) the right ones. Written in a style that is practical and easy to follow, Dr. David's book is perfect for anyone looking to better their lives.

Leigh Kramer says

This absolutely blew me away. It's about how we can best navigate life's ups and downs. Emotionally agile people are able to adapt to whatever life throws at them and stay true to their values, as well as grow stronger and healthier.

It's a wonderful blend of story, research, and practical advice. David really gets into our motivations and the habits that trip us up and how small changes can change everything. Some of the concepts were empowering, others confirmed what I've already been doing. If you like Brene Brown or you know your Enneagram type, this book is completely up your alley. Even if you aren't into Brene or the Enneagram, you should still read this book. It's truly helpful and clarifying.

Highly recommended.

Adarsh J says

I shall remember to dance while I can!

I really liked this book. The author uses anecdotes from so many different walks of the life that you are bound to connect to some of them, and she being a psychologist, walks you through the situation, explaining possible course of actions, teaching how the thought and the thinker are distinct from each other. The organisation of the content matter is well thought out, it gradually introduces how one can handle emotions and be agile, all the while acknowledging the emotions and understanding why you are feeling them, without a need to actually carry out any action to run away from emotion.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

I can't say enough good about Emotional Agility. It is sad to realize that in this day of plenty so many people suffer from depression and anxiety. Emotional Agility is full of wisdom for these woes. Susan David walks us through ways to dance your way through troubles. Don't think it's another of those dry textbook self-help books, though; David shares lots of wonderful stories that make her ideas more real and more clear.

Ninnytendo says

I don't usually read non-fiction and self-help books because I tend to find them dry, boring and too factual. This is a very different type of non-fiction book. It is very interesting, relatable to your every-day life and

very engaging. Susan David uses a very human and down-to-earth approach and she uses very sympathetic and relatable situations you can learn from and examples to make you reflect about your own behaviour.

Emotional agility comprises many aspects of life and behaviour and Susan David breaks it down in very simple and easy to understand areas. Each chapter deals with a different aspect of emotional agility and it contains examples of her study and experience to demonstrate how to change your perception and behaviour in order to deal with the situation and become more mentally agile. You will find yourself thinking about your personal behaviour and how you would react to the situations that Dr David relates. You will follow the steps towards mental agility: 'Show up' (be aware of the emotions), 'Step Out' (approach them with courage) and 'Walk Your Why' (understand what your personal values and aims are and act accordingly). You will become aware of techniques to understand and appreciate emotion and deal with it to live a fulfilled and efficient life.

I received a free copy of this book from Mumsnet and this is my personal and unbiased opinion.

Elaine says

I was expecting a little more from this book given its hype. As others have said, you don't really learn anything new from the book, nor does it offer up much help in applying it to your life. The author just tries to hastily offer up some tired suggestions at the conclusion to make up for the aforementioned flaws. Sure, some of the anecdotal evidence is interesting, but it's not organized in a way that really hammers home any of the principles. Having read many self-help books of this nature, I'd recommend Grit over this one if you're short on time.
