



'An accessible, reader-friendly voyage. *Emotional Agility* can be helpful to anyone' Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*

EMOTIONAL AGILITY

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'Essential reading' Susan Cain, author of *Quiet*

Get unstuck

embrace change

and thrive

in work

and life

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WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Emotional agility means being aware of, and accepting of all your emotions, & especially learning from the most difficult ones. It also means getting beyond conditioned or pre-programmed cognitive and emotional responses (your hooks) to live in the moment with a clear reading of present circumstances, respond appropriately, and then act in alignment with your deepest values.

WHAT QUESTION IS THIS BOOK ANSWERING?

What does it take internally, in the way we deal with our thoughts, emotions and stories, for us to thrive in a complex and changing world?

WHO SHOULD READ IT?

Anyone looking to understand and appreciate how important their emotions are in how they think, react and the impact this has on themselves and others - leaders of teams/parents.

THE BOOK IN 3 SENTENCES

Emotions pass. They are transient. They don't need to be acted on - "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. – Viktor Frankl - It is developing our capacity to recognise and hold this space that our emotional agility lies.

Becoming emotionally agile is a practice, not a product.

Emotions are information - they do not need to be scary, they contain information that can help us figure out what matters most to ourselves & others.

COMPONENTS IN FOCUS

In particular I think this book can support our understanding of these components in particular:

- Feelings - Welcoming the release of emotion & Unexpressed feelings can inhibit good thinking.
- Information - Absorbing all the relevant the facts

WHAT IT'S MADE ME THINK ABOUT:

- The concept of coherence is really useful in teaching why a thinking partnership is so effective - having someone else there presencing encouragement can shift us away from fear and more toward living a life without untrue and limiting assumptions.
- Actively choosing courage to shift out of ways of being that no longer serve us.
- That negative emotions are perhaps more useful information than positive - emotions are information
- Dead people's goals - The idea of trying to live a life free of worry, stress, grief, and pain. David calls that having dead people's goals, because only dead people are free from those feelings. To live and to be human is to be sad and happy, to be hurt and feel love, and experience grief and joy.
- When we express feelings just enough we can think and respond more clearly and then cultivate courage and authenticity.

MY FAVOURITE QUOTES

1. To see each other, we need to learn how to see ourselves.
2. The more we try to ignore our emotions, the greater their hold on us.
3. Life's beauty is inseparable from its fragility.
4. Diversity isn't just people, it's also what's inside people, including diversity of emotion.

SUMMARY

1. Emotional Agility is having the courage to be yourself and to allow yourself to fully experience your thoughts and feelings.
2. David's language of 'unhooking' seems to mirror the role assumptions play in limiting our thinking.

CHAPTER NOTES

CHAPTER 1

- Emotions are a neurochemical system that evolved to help us navigate life. They are the body's immediate, physical responses to important signals from the outside world. They are embodied responses to situations, a natural guidance system but they are not always reliable.
- These automatic responses can lead to what David terms emotional rigidity = I think this is very aligned to our understanding of assumptions.
- Emotional agility is about opening up space between stimulus and response so you can intentionally & consciously respond so you can live aligned to your intentions and values.
- Impact of multitasking on performance is the same as being drunk.

CHAPTER 2

- Most people speak approximately 16000 words a day, we think thousands more.
- Thoughts in isolation do not cause behaviour, old stories don't cause behaviour. We cause our behaviour.

CHAPTER 3

- The count can vary but there are approximately 7 basic emotions - joy, anger, sadness, fear, surprise, contempt and disgust. They have evolved with us as they have helped us survive. Yet 5 of these are challenging for most people. These dark and difficult emotions have a purpose, we need to learn to accept them as useful even if they are uncomfortable.
- Suppressed emotions inevitably surface in unintended ways.

CHAPTER 4



- We can say with confidence that showing up and applying words to emotions is a tremendously helpful way to deal with stress, anxiety and loss. Talking and writing can both equally help. When we articulate how we feel it creates a distance which allows us to get fresh perspective, unearth assumptions and move on. Dissolves the entanglement and loosens the assumptions - one reason why thinking sessions are so incredibly effective.
- This might also be one reason why welcoming a release of feeling in thinking really does enable people to think more clearly.
- Practicing mindfulness improves connectivity inside the brain networks that stop us from being distracted. It increases competence, improves memory, creativity and mood, as well as relationships, health and longevity.
- By really paying attention we become more flexible and insightful.
- Thoughts and emotions contain information, not directions.

CHAPTER 8

- Curse of comfort - why don't we reach our own potential? Fear.
- Just as we're wired to explore, we're also wired to keep ourselves safe and our brains confuse safety with comfort. So if something feels comfortable, even if it's no good for us, our brains signal that we're just fine and if something feels new, difficult or challenging fear kicks in.
- Fear comes in many shapes and sizes - procrastination, perfectionism, shutting down, excuses - yet it speaks only one word 'no'.
- When we have to make judgements about risk we show a bias toward the familiar - we even give more credence to opinions that appear widely held. Which means if a simplistic and easily accessible idea is repeated often enough and we aren't listening critically, we may accept it as truth - importance of this is really important in groups/where decisions are being made.
- Any time there are gaps in our knowledge, fear fills in the gaps.
- Overall coherence seems to be our top mental and emotional priority. Coherence is a crude proxy in our brain for safe even when the desire for coherence leads us to go against our own best interests. Therefore how we were treated as children forms the foundation for how we expect to be treated as adults and anything that doesn't align with this feels dangerous!
- For many people the familiar and comforting identity and their assumptions is a holdover from childhood long after it has stopped being true.
- Leaving the plateau - choose courage over comfort - confusing safety with the familiar, accessible and coherent limits our options.



CHAPTER 9



- Prevailing wisdom of today's business culture is that uncomfortable thoughts and feelings have no place at the office and employees, particularly leaders should be either stoical or eternally optimistic
- But all healthy human beings have an inner stream of thoughts and feelings that include criticism, doubt and fear. That's just the brain doing it's job trying to make sense of the world, anticipate and solve problems and avoid potential pitfalls
- Unfortunately the same forces of speed and change that demand flexibility also conspire to keep us rigid. We have so much information and so many decisions to make that we can quickly default to the first best guess which usually involves black and white thinking and with little time to interact we often reduce our relationships to transactions.
- Dangerous combination of distraction, premature decision making and simplistic solutions.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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

<https://hbr.org/2016/11/3-ways-to-better-understand-your-emotions>

https://www.ted.com/speakers/susan_david

<https://www.susandavid.com/>

