

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

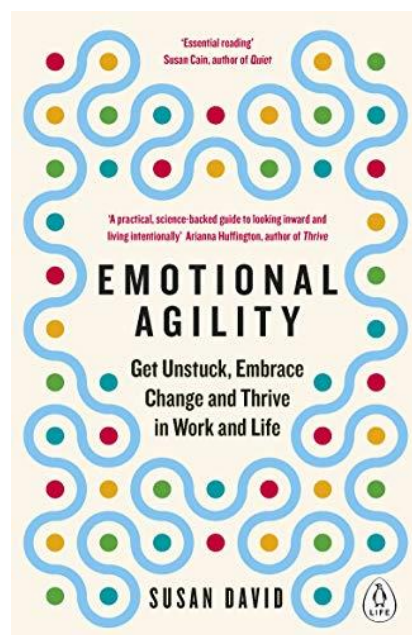
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For me, affectivity (where, above all, I highlight tendencies, emotions, feelings, sensations, passions, states of mind) is certainly an essential component of the human person to guarantee self-fulfillment. However, it is often misinterpreted or even disregarded, even by many scholars and investigators. Thus, I find this very readable work by Dr. Susan David quite interesting, who, dialoguing with different areas of knowledge and using real and concrete cases, seeks to help us to demystify some errors, concerning an area of affectivity, emotions, and to understand how good emotional education is important so that we can flourish and, at the same time, help others in the same process, especially in this period, where competitiveness, agitation and speed reign.

In this sense, an important point that I would initially like to highlight in this work is the fact that the author approaches the theme in a very realistic way, thus avoiding falling into extremes or reductionism, such as: emotions are essentially irrational (dualism); emotions are synonymous with psychologism or emotivism (monism).

Thus, in this line, I consider pertinent when she defends that emotions, although they are a reality essentially different from the intellect and the will (although, in my view, the author mistakenly considers these organic faculties, that is, that they have their origin in the brain), they must always dialogue and relate to them. This becomes evident when, for example, she argues that a good part of emotions is based on cognitive acts; that emotions allow us to know reality; that emotions often tell us how we should act in the face of the circumstances in which we find ourselves; that reason



and will must interpret emotions and, at the same time, integrate them into our lives, in order to avoid that they direct or command us, etc..

Another relevant point that I highlight in this work is the fact that the author defends that essentially there are no «positive»/«negative» emotions, but rather «pleasant»/«unpleasant» and «good»/«bad», considering the object that motivates them. In this way, the demonstrations that the author uses to prove that feeling unpleasant emotions, in certain and appropriate circumstances, is essential in order to know reality well and act in accordance with it are also interesting. In the same vein, it is also relevant when she demonstrates that certain characters, which are characterized by having more «unpleasant» emotions, also have advantages, compared to those, who present more «pleasant» emotions, concerning human development and flourishing.

Subsequently, another essential point of the work consists in defending that emotions must be in tune and proportionate to the circumstances (object or event) that motivate them. For example, it is bad to feel joy in the face of evil that has happened to a person, although it may be pleasant for us; in the same way, it is also bad to feel anger or hatred in the face of a person's generosity towards us, when he has no ulterior intentions in doing so.

Since emotions allow us to know reality, thus indicating how we should act, I also consider it important when the author argues that it is, therefore, essential to be aware of them. Otherwise, not only do we abdicate that knowledge, but we also allow them to dominate us. However, even if we are conscious of our emotions, it is also important to emphasize, in this way, that the author appeals not to repress them, but to interpret and integrate them. There are, therefore, many people who, when they feel certain emotions, mainly because they are unpleasant, suffocate or disregard them, something that not only presupposes a lot of energy for the person, but also puts their psychic health at risk and, subsequently, their self-realization.

According to the author, to be emotionally agile, we, therefore, have to be aware of our emotions. However, in this process, I also consider it relevant, when she also says that we should not accommodate ourselves to our emotions; thus, we must distance ourselves from them, in order to avoid that they dominate us, because between a stimulus and a response there is always a space, which we can use to our benefit. For

this, sequentially, it is important: 1) Stop and think; 2) Compassionately, accept the fact that we are experiencing them (especially if they are bad or unpleasant), because the fact that we feel something does not mean that we are our emotion (there is, for example, a difference between to be angry and being angry). 3) Subsequently, it is essential to interpret the emotion we are experiencing and give it a name (for this, it is also necessary to know the essence of each emotion). 4) Evaluate the emotion, checking if it fits the reality. 5) Integrate it into our life, considering the circumstance that motivates it as well as our values. If we don't do it (and here the author also emphasizes that in this process we must be impartial and honest), they can condition our mental health, as can be seen, for example, in «rumination», which consists of a constant and intense actualization of our emotions, without taking us anywhere, thus making, analogically speaking, a drop of water becomes an ocean.

From the author, I have pointed out that a good part of our emotions is based on our cognitive acts. In this sense, I consider it equally pertinent, when she also emphasizes that it is fundamental for our emotional education to be flexible, that is, to know and accept reality well (and, thus, to avoid all prejudices, ideologies, false judgments, bad attitudes), as well as who we truly are and want to be, even if it costs us a lot. Thus, in this process, it is equally fundamental to know what our values are and, at the same time, to be consistent with them, that is, to have emotions and to act in accordance with them. However, despite considering the author's observation relevant, I think she is wrong when she says that we are the ones who create and choose our values; or rather, I think that she has and transmits a very superficial conception of the notion of value. Objecting, for example, moral values are always values, whether we want it or not: an act of justice can never be a disvalue for one person or something neutral for another.

I think, in the same way, that she errs in not presupposing a hierarchy in values. Objecting, for example, intellectual values are hierarchically over aesthetic ones, as they have a greater degree of transcendence.

I think these superficial remarks may be due to a lack of distinction between the terms «value» and «good» (objective or subjective): for example, having a good job, a good house, a good career, etc. does not necessarily and essentially presuppose the term value. On the contrary, many «goods» can be genuine disvalues: for example,

when I calumny a person in order to be promoted in my career. In the same way, a «value» may not be a «good»: for example, when I tell the truth and, with that, I am threatened.

In this work, I also find it interesting when the author states that it is essential to give meaning to our lives (in my opinion, through the choice of a vocation), because, in this way, we can better have and integrate our emotions. To do so, it is necessary to realistically know the values as well as who we are and act in accordance with them. In this sense, it is also important to highlight the importance that the author gives to identity, authenticity and coherence in life, as well as to self-esteem and self-acceptance, despite the many defects that we may have, which is not synonymous with self-conformism, but with wanting to overcome us, 'friendly', day after day.

Another fundamental point of this work is the importance that the author attaches to literature and cinema as good means of educating people emotionally. I think that this idea can serve as a challenge to great writers and filmmakers, as there is often an emotional miseducation through these means. An idea, which according to the author, can be extended to the media.

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In this work, it is also to be commended the fact that the author defends that we must help other people (and the sooner the better) in the process of emotional agility (a task that is also up to companies, societies and groups), always distinguishing the

person of their emotions (that is, we must always respect the person regardless of their emotional world). Thus, those who have lived through dramatic situations, integrated and overcome them (and here I also emphasize the various ways that the author, throughout the book, shows us to overcome these situations, above all, through writing and meditation) are the ones who are in better conditions to help other people in emotional education. Here, in this sense, I emphasize the importance it attaches to our coherence in our lives, as another great means of emotional education.

Finally, I highlight the author's good invitation to become emotionally agile, not a short-term process, but a long-term one. In other words, as this process is narrative and dynamic, we can, day after day, become more and more emotionally agile, as there is no limit to it. Likewise, it is a process, as the author emphasizes, that is up to each one of us, where no one can replace us in this adventure (hence the importance of autonomy or self-government and responsibility). Thus, we should not feel obligated to do so, but want to embrace it of our own free will, because it is for our own sake. And when we enter and preserve in this process, we can always acquire the habit, which later sustains and strengthens this our intention and vice versa.

I conclude, if I may, by encouraging Dr. Susan David to continue with her research and to transmit it to the whole world, which, in my opinion, due to several factors, needs, more than ever, of good emotional agility. Emotional agility is, therefore, a very important factor for self-fulfillment, as well as, in my opinion, for successively helping others to flourish and, in this way, build a better society, and so on.

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