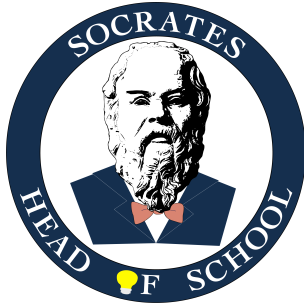


## *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in World and Life* by Susan David



### Think you might want to read this book?

Have you ever caught yourself ruminating about “What ifs...?” Or have you been paralyzed by fear, unable to make decisions? In *Emotional Agility*, Susan David provides a guidebook grounded in psychological research to help us embrace all of our emotions, even the most uncomfortable ones, discover our “why”, and align our lives with our values.

### What would Socrates ask?

- What is the “why” of teaching? Would a school where teachers and administrators live their “whys” lead to more resilient students?
- How can emotionally aware teachers change classroom dynamics for their students?
- What do emotionally agile teachers, students, administrators, and schools look like?
- How can our lives be richer when we learn to live with our negative emotions rather than bottling them up or brooding over them?
- How can teachers and administrators serve as positive emotional role models for students?
- How can we teach students a rich emotional vocabulary and show them how to unhook from their emotions?

### Research

- Having emotional agility has been shown to help people with a number of troubles: negative self-image, heartbreak, pain, anxiety, depression, procrastination, tough transitions, *etc.*
- In a survey of thousands of respondents, researchers in England found that of all of the “happy habits” science has currently identified as being keys to a more fulfilling life, self-acceptance was one of the most strongly associated with overall satisfaction.
- Self-compassion is associated with healthy behaviors such as eating right, exercising, sleeping well, and managing stress during tough times.
- People who wrote about emotionally charged episodes experienced a marked increase in their physical and mental well-being. They were happier, less depressed, and less anxious. In the months after their writing sessions, they had lower blood pressure, better immune function, and fewer doctor visits. They also reported higher-quality relationships and more success at work.
- A series of studies at Harvard and the University of Virginia asked participants to sit alone with their thoughts for ten minutes. Most subjects were miserable. Some went so far as to give themselves a mild electric shock rather than sitting there and being present.
- In a study of workplaces that were exceptionally engaged, only 4% mentioned their pay as a motivator. Instead, they highlighted a sense of connection with their teams,

challenge in their work, being truly seen as an individual, and feeling empowered in their role.

## Concepts

- “Emotional agility is a process that allows you to be in the moment, changing or maintaining your behaviors to live in ways that align with your intentions and values. The process isn’t about ignoring difficult emotions and thoughts. It’s about holding those emotions and thoughts loosely, facing them courageously and compassionately, and then moving past them to make big things happen in your life.”
- Emotions are the body’s immediate physical responses to important signals from the outside world. While important, our emotions are not always reliable. They can help us make decisions or can confuse our perception of what is happening at the moment.
- Many of us have trouble settling into these negative feelings and we cope in some unhelpful ways: bottling and brooding.
- Showing up means that we face up to, make peace with, and find ways to live an honest and open way with our demons or those fears that haunt us.
- Feelings are not bad or good. Feelings just are. We need to experience them, learn their contours, and lean into them without running for the exits.
- When you are emotionally agile, you don’t waste energy wrestling your impulses. Rather, you make choices connected to what you value.
- Practicing mindfulness can help us by increasing connectivity in the brain. Mindfulness has a variety of benefits: stress reduction, increased memory function, a more positive sense of self, enhanced empathy toward others, boosts in creativity, better moods, increased health, and longevity. This can make us more flexible and insightful.
- When we feel that an emotion has “come out of nowhere”, it is mindfulness that allows us to notice our thoughts rather than get entangled in them.
- In order to move on, we need to engage our sense of *wanting* to do something rather than *having* to do something.
- When we unhook emotionally, we are less likely to employ bias in giving employees opportunities and in completing evaluations. We are more likely to look at the situation that someone at work is in rather than seeing a fault as part of a person’s personality or inborn traits.
- Workplaces need to be agile so that employees feel that they can speak up when they have doubts or disagreements about a project or decision. If people are not willing to pay attention to difficult feelings at work, this could contribute to groupthink fiascos.
- Mood contagion means that people’s moods can impact others. For example, if we are working with a colleague who is stressed, we may feel that dress second hand. Even seeing a stressed-out person can increase an observer’s stress.
- Be aware of the display rules that we are teaching our children. What messages, intentional and unintentional, are we giving children about how to respond to a situation. When something goes wrong are we saying, “Don’t cry. It’s ok.” or are we

saying, "It's not ok, but it will be ok." and letting that child wrestle with uncomfortable emotions?

- Let children know: 1. Emotions pass. 2. Emotions are not scary. 3. Emotions are teachers.
- Work to coach, not control, a child's emotions.
  - Sometimes we want weepy or angry kids to behave in more socially acceptable ways sending the signals that their feelings do not matter to us.
  - Pause to acknowledge how your child is feeling. Show up and sit with your child in her or his distress.

### Quotes from the author

- "Emotionally agile people are dynamic. They demonstrate flexibility in dealing with our fast-changing, complex world. They are able to tolerate high levels of stress and endure setbacks while remaining engaged, open, and receptive. They understand that life isn't always easy, but they continue to act according to their most cherished values and long-term goals."

### Implement tomorrow?

- Change your relationship with stress. Instead of saying "I am stressed" say "I feel stressed."

### Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education

Author(s) Last Name	Title
Kahneman	<i>Thinking Fast and Slow</i>
Dweck	<i>Growth Mindset</i>

The applicability of this book to education is ....



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