

Emotional Agility: The way to thrive in an uncertain world

- Zoryna O'Donnell

*"Emotions can get in the way or get you on the way."
(Mavis Mazhura, Author and Leadership Coach)*

Emotions and emotional intelligence are hot topics in business, personal development and wellness. The last 35+ years of research on [emotion and decision making](#) provide sufficient evidence of the causal effects of emotions on the quality of our relationships and work group dynamics; economic, political and policy choices; creativity and performance; sleep patterns; physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing. Furthermore, according to some studies, [emotion trumps logic](#) and reason in our decision-making, and [uncertainty tends to intensify both positive and negative emotions](#).

In the modern world where only uncertainty is certain, we need to know more about our emotions in order to better understand ourselves, our actions and their implications. A concept of emotional agility coined by Dr Susan David provides a helpful framework for re-incorporating our most troubling feelings as a source of energy and creativity, so that we could thrive, not just survive, in this uncertain world.

Dr Susan David defines emotional agility as "a process that enables us to navigate life's twists and turns with self-acceptance, clear-sightedness, and an open mind." She emphasises that this process is not about ignoring difficult emotions and thoughts, but 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."

In her best-selling book [Emotional Agility](#), Dr. David describes four essential steps that underpin the process of gaining emotional agility as you move from being 'hooked' on your thoughts and emotions to thriving:

- 1. Showing Up:** "Facing into your thoughts, emotions and behaviours willingly, with curiosity and kindness", instead of ignoring them or over-emphasising 'positive thinking'.
- 2. Stepping Out:** "Detaching from, and observing your thoughts and emotions to see them for what they are - just thoughts, just emotions." By doing so, you can create open, non-judgemental space between your feelings and your response to them, "learning to see yourself as the chessboard, filled with possibilities, rather than as any one piece on the board, confined to certain preordained moves".
- 3. Walking Your Why:** Focussing more on our core values, aspirations and most important goals - after you have uncluttered and calmed down your mental process. This will allow you to "take the long view" which in turn can help you find new and better ways of getting there.
- 4. Moving On:** Small deliberate tweaks infused with your values can make a powerful difference in your life. Find the balance between challenge and competence, so that you are excited, enthusiastic and invigorated by the challenges rather than complacent or overwhelmed.

As Dr David pointed out: "The ultimate goal of emotional agility is to keep a sense of challenge and growth alive and well throughout your life."

If you have just a few minutes you can watch [Susan David's TED Talk](#) on how the way we deal with our emotions shapes everything that matters: our actions, careers, relationships, health and happiness. And when you have 45 minutes to spare, watch this insightful video of [Susan David talking about Happiness and Resilience](#).

Emotional agility is an essential skill which can be developed by anyone – whoever they are and whatever they face. This free [Emotional Agility Quiz](#) could be a good starting point. It will give you personalised feedback on how to be more effective with your thoughts and emotions, so you can come to your everyday choices and your life with more intention and insight. The quiz takes just 5 minutes to complete and you will receive a free 10-page personalised report offering specific strategies to help you become more emotionally agile.

Implement those strategies and notice the difference it will make to all areas of your life.

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Zoryna is a change consultant, ICF coach, trainer, public speaker, author and business owner. She is alumna of The Neuroscience Academy and a creator of several high impact programmes such as Quantum Leap to Success®, Breakthrough Skills Programme™, Leading Change with the Brain in Mind™, mindworks4wellbeing® and the Workplace Wellness programme. Zoryna is a contributor to the Psychreg - a Highly Commended Blog (UK Blog Awards 2017 and 2018) and one of the 10 Most Influential Psychology Blogs in the world; and to The Best Brain Possible blog dedicated to mental health. She is also a Mentor of the Warwick Business School (WBS) Mentoring Programme, providing career mentoring and advice to individual students and graduates of the Warwick Business School MBA Programme.

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