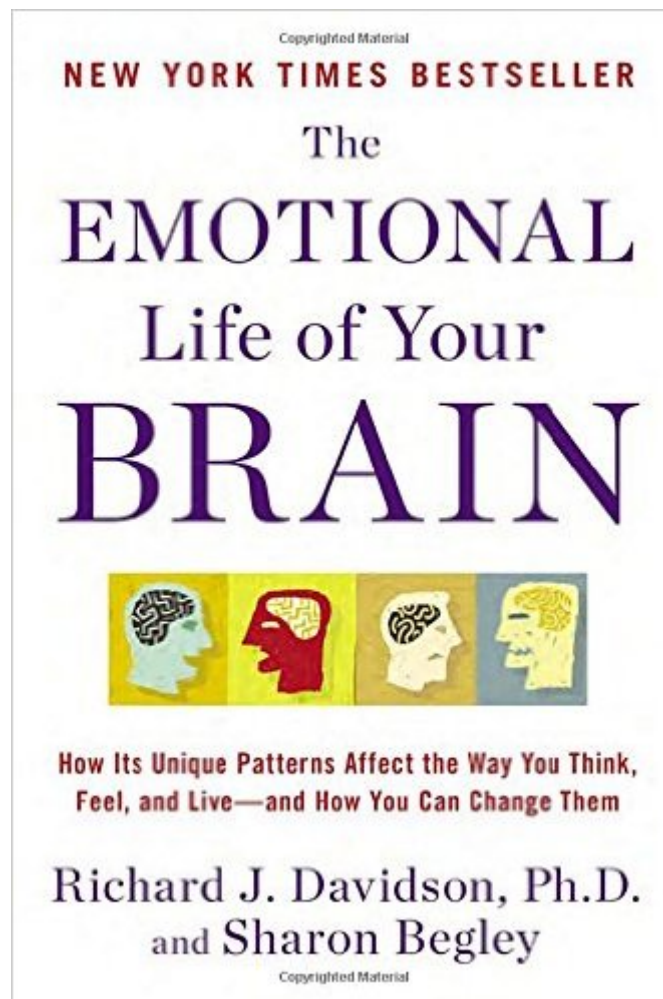


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# The Emotional Life Of Your Brain: How Its Unique Patterns Affect The Way You Think, Feel, And Live--and How You Can Change Them



## Synopsis

What is your emotional fingerprint? Why are some people so quick to recover from setbacks? Why are some so attuned to others that they seem psychic? Why are some people always up and others always down? In his thirty-year quest to answer these questions, pioneering neuroscientist Richard J. Davidson discovered that each of us has an Emotional Style, composed of Resilience, Outlook, Social Intuition, Self-Awareness, Sensitivity to Context, and Attention. Where we fall on these six continuums determines our own emotional fingerprint. • Sharing Dr. Davidson's fascinating case histories and experiments, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain* offers a new model for treating conditions like autism and depression as it empowers us all to better understand ourselves and live more meaningful lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author is a prominent researcher in neuroscience, specifically what has become "affective neuroscience." That is, the study of the neurological basis of emotions. Here, you will read about 6 distinctive brain patterns, or circuits, that underlie how people react to the world, in particular how people regulate their emotions. You won't read about the difference between brain patterns representing Joy vs. Pride vs. Amusement, or Sadness vs. Shame vs. Envy. Presumably these are higher level categorizations which don't have such clear brain signatures (yet?). Instead, the author describes these 6 brain circuits as the underpinnings of what he calls Emotional Style which govern the context and duration of emotions for different people, and which ultimately give rise to moods

and personality. The 6 categories of Emotional Style are:- Resilience: How slowly or quickly you recover from adversity.- Outlook: How long you are able to sustain positive emotion.- Social Intuition: How adept you are at picking up social signals from the people around you.- Self-Awareness: How well you perceive bodily feelings that reflect emotions.- Sensitivity to Context: How good you are at regulating your emotional responses to take into account the context you find yourself in.- Attention: How sharp and clear your focus is. At first I was wary of this approach, as there are numerous classification systems for emotions that strike me as somewhat arbitrary. After a while though, it sunk in and I realized how fundamentally these functions affect the contours (ups and downs) and contexts of our emotional states, and how we perceive and react to our social world.

This is just a really good book. I recently read *Quirk: Brain Science Makes Sense of Your Peculiar Personality* and the two of them together provide an excellent view of emotions and your brain. They are very different though. *Quirk* is kind of quirky and all about mice and (wo)men. This book has a much more professional and serious tone. They both are valuable and useful. This book traces the author's history in psychological and neuroscience research. At first that bugged me as it seemed to be all about him. Most of the research in this book is his own and/or that of his students. However, in the end I think that turned out to be a good thing both because he quite obviously is a preeminent expert in the field and he goes pretty deep into the implications of his own findings. In other words he knows what he is talking about and not just speculating about the meaning of someone else's work. In any case you see the history and the evidence in favor of the author's ideas build over time and he does an excellent job putting it all together. He definitely believes you can alter to some degree your emotional profile and he ends the book with suggestions for exercises on how to do that for any of the six dimensions he describes. You will come away from reading this book with a much deeper understanding of the dimensions of your emotional style and their underlying neural correlates. This book is definitely for the general reader and while it is densely packed with information it is not overly technical or academic.

Let me start off by saying that overall I liked this book and felt I got some valuable insights on issues related to emotional psychology, brain science, and a wee bit on meditation. So I'm glad I bought and read this book. But the insights felt more subtle than big "aha"s and the supposed heart of the book--understanding our/the six core emotional styles--fell a bit flat for me. Maybe looking for "ahas" is a lot to ask of any book--and certainly I don't expect that of everything I read--but there wasn't

enough payback in the overall reading pleasure of *The Emotional Life of Your Brain* to overcome some awkwardness and unrewarding parts to call this "must reading"--at least not for a general audience (for those interested in research on our emotions and the brain, you will definitely find it worthwhile). Information Gained I think the heart of my issues with this book were with the research of the six emotional styles. It's not that doubted the validity of what Davidson discovered, but the discoveries didn't feel that exactly translated into actionable behaviors. In small part, my problem was I didn't truly get the distinction of the difference between some of the styles. That is, we're told there are six emotional components that are crucial (or at least measurable) to how we react emotionally: Resilience, Outlook, Self-Awareness, Social Intuition, Context Sensitivity, and Attention. The differences between Resilience and Outlook seem pretty subtle and especially so for Social Intuition and Context Sensitivity (which is about relating to people in an appropriate way given the context).

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