

From Feeling to Meaning

A Neuro Nudges Tool for Emotional Awareness & Regulation



One of the most influential psychologists and neuroscientists of our time, Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett, is rewriting what we thought we knew about the brain and emotions.

Emotions are not just reactions to events; they play a crucial role in our brain's predictive processes. For example, feeling anxious before an exam isn't just a response to stress; it's your brain's way of preparing you for a challenging situation by heightening your

awareness and focus. In today's rapidly changing environment, our brains' predictive abilities are more important than ever. Whether it's dealing with global events or personal challenges, our capacity to anticipate and adapt is key to our wellbeing. Understanding that our brains are designed to predict and prepare, rather than just react, can help us develop better coping strategies and resilience.

Purpose:

This tool, based on the work of Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett helps you pause, notice what your body is telling you, and explore what that feeling might really mean, so you can choose your response rather than react on autopilot. Use this tool in the moment or after the fact to reflect, reset, and respond with intention.

1 Name the Feeling (Start with the Body)

What's happening in your body right now?
Tight chest? Butterflies? Warm face?
Clenched jaw?
How intense is it? (Scale of 1–10)
This is your feeling, raw data from your nervous system.

2 What Emotion Is Your Brain Predicting?

If you had to give this feeling a name, what emotion would it be?
Fear? Anger? Excitement? Shame?
What's happening around you that could be shaping that interpretation?
Your brain makes a best guess based on context and past experience.

3 Is There Another Possible Emotion?

Have you felt this body sensation before, and what emotion did it mean then?
Could it mean something different today?
e.g. Could "anxiety" actually be "anticipation"?
Could "anger" be "disappointment"?
Emotions are stories, and you can explore different ones.

4 Choose Your Response

What story helps you move forward with purpose?
How would you respond differently if it was [insert different emotion]?
"If this is excitement, I'll prepare with energy. If it's fear, I'll ground myself."
You always have a choice about what meaning you make.

Sample Script

"I notice a tight chest and fast heartbeat. My brain says it's anxiety, but could it also be excitement?
If I choose excitement, I'll take a breath and step in with purpose."

Why It Works | Key Takeaways

- Builds emotional awareness and cognitive flexibility
- Supports self-regulation and intentional action
- Enhances understanding of the brain's predictive nature
- Moves beyond the simplistic "fight or flight" model

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Susan David's Emotional Agility

Susan David, PhD, developed the concept of Emotional Agility as a science-based approach to navigating life's complexity with clarity, courage, and compassion. It's about being flexible with your thoughts and feelings so you can respond optimally rather than reactively, aligned with your values and goals. As she says, "The way we engage with our emotions shapes everything."

Core Principles of Emotional Agility:

- **Show Up**
Face your thoughts and emotions with curiosity and acceptance, even the uncomfortable ones.
- **Step Out**
Detach from your emotions; you are not your thoughts or feelings. Create space between stimulus and response.
- **Walk Your Why**
Use your values as a compass. Let what matters most guide your choices.
- **Move On**
Take small, deliberate, values-aligned actions each day.

Emotional Agility Key Reminders

- Feelings are data, not directives. Use them to inform, not control, your decisions.
- Name it to tame it. Labelling your emotions increases self-understanding.
- From hooked to unhooked. Notice when you're emotionally "hooked" and choose a wiser response.
- Tiny tweaks = big shifts. Small actions aligned with values create sustainable change.
- Values over goals. Anchor your actions in what matters most.
- Self-compassion > self-criticism. Treat yourself like you'd treat a friend.

Brain Boosters

Read

- [Book – How Emotions are Made by Lisa Feldman Barrett](#)
- [Book - Emotional Agility by Susan David](#)
- [Book - Atlas of the Heart by Brené Brown](#)
- [Book - Positive Optimism by Dr Sue Varma](#)
- [Book – Permission to Feel by Marc Brackett](#)

Watch

- [Watch - How Your Brain Creates Reality with Lisa Feldman Barrett](#)
- [Watch – Your Life Moves in the Direction of Your Strongest Emotion with Robyne Hanley-Defoe](#)
- [Watch - How to make stress your friend with Kelly McGonigal](#)
- [Watch - The 4 domains of emotional intelligence with Daniel Goleman](#)

Explore

- [Website - Lisa Feldman Barrett](#)
- [Website - Susan David](#)
- [Free Download - Riders & Elephants Emotional Culture Deck](#)
- [Resource – Feelings Wheel](#)
- [Website – Brené Brown Dare to Lead Hub](#)
- [Website – The School of Life](#)

