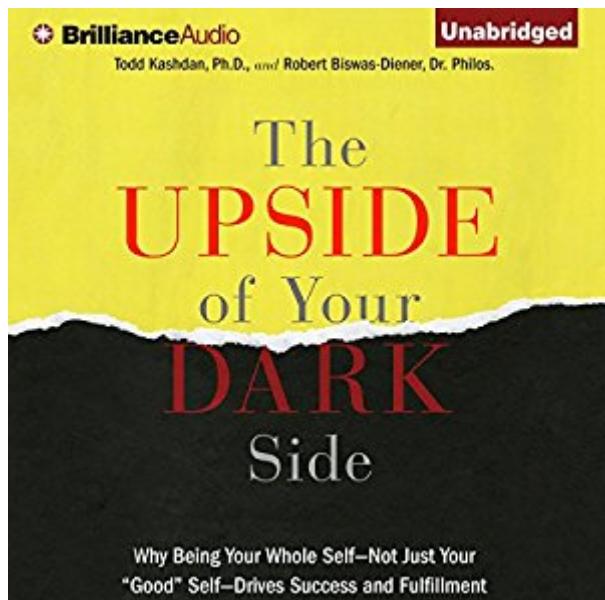


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The Upside Of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self - Not Just Your "Good" Self - Drives Success And Fulfillment



Synopsis

In *The Upside of Your Dark Side*, two pioneering researchers in the field of psychology show that while mindfulness, kindness, and positivity can take us far, they cannot take us all the way. Sometimes, they can even hold us back. Emotions like anger, anxiety, or doubt might be uncomfortable, but it turns out that they are also incredibly useful. For instance: Anger fuels creativity. Guilt sparks improvement. Self-doubt enhances performance. Selfishness increases courage. Mindlessness leads to better decisions. The key lies in what the authors call "emotional agility," the ability to access our full range of emotions - not just the "good" ones - in order to respond most effectively to whatever situation we might encounter. Drawing on years of scientific research and a wide array of real-life examples including sports, the military, parenting, education, romance, business, and more, *The Upside of Your Dark Side* is a refreshing reality check that shows us how we can truly maximize our potential.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have always been a pretty happy and cheery person, and I have rarely allowed my "dark" side to realistically ever rear its head. I grew up in an environment where conflict was avoided at all costs, and negative emotions considered to be bad, so reading this book was not only highly informative but allowed me to access and harness a side of myself I have ignored. The authors begin by observing that most people don't know what makes them happy. We estimate the effect events will have on us, and typically don't experience the highs or lows that we expect from events. So rather

than striving for happiness all the time, the authors suggest going for something closer to 80/20, 80% positive to 20% negative, taking advantage of the benefits of perceived negative concepts like anger, guilt, anxiety, and mindlessness. This leads to social, emotional, and mental agility, the ability to function optimally across the wide range of human emotions rather than unrealistically pretending to be happy all the time. The authors focus on the downsides of being happy, such as that happy people are less persuasive and less likely to spot lies. Happy people tend to take mental short cuts and thus when things get stressful, happy people are more likely to rely on stereotypical views of others. They also explain the benefits of negative emotions. For example, anger can lead to greater creativity and guilt can cause positive change in people. The authors provide ways to effectively use anger and guilt, avoiding rage and shame, which are rarely effective accomplishing anything. The quest for happiness at all costs, evidenced by our "comfort at all costs" culture, is actually hurting our ability to be happy.

I was interested in this book because I tend to be more of a dark-side person in general, and have been plagued for most of my 58 years by people telling me to smile or cheer up, or not to get angry, which I've always found pretty infuriating. Like the author, I feel that there is too much emphasis on positivity in our society. After all, major change in society usually happens because people are angry or frustrated - not because they're happy and comfortable. The author makes a good point about how our striving to be more comfortable can cause us to avoid growth or change, because those states can be very uncomfortable at times. The book attempts to make the case that we need to use our entire range of emotions, positive and negative, to be whole and live fully. Some of the points made in the book include the idea that creativity is often fueled by a range of emotions; if you don't have any problems to solve, you're unlikely to go looking for creative solutions. Another is that the so-called negative emotions, such as anger and anxiety, have a useful place in our lives since they make us aware of our surroundings and of possible dangerous situations or people. I liked the idea of re-labeling these emotions as unhealthy rather than negative. The author recommends happiness as a by-product of a meaningful life, rather than a goal in itself. He also points out that for humans, being on autopilot is a more natural state than the current emphasis on "mindfulness" and being in the moment. There is also the idea that most of us engage in some form of manipulation fairly often, and that narcissism is not necessarily a bad thing in moderation.

In this new informative and insightful book, the authors examine some major caveats to the popular enthusiasm about positive psychology, mindfulness, and other approaches to promoting happiness

and well-being. The authors are accomplished psychology researchers whose careers have included a focus on positive psychology, a field that seeks to help people feel happier and lead more fulfilling lives. The book explores and references a lot of psychology research, presenting it in a relevant manner that provides suitable context and a clear understanding of the significance of these studies. For those who are familiar with other integrative psychological theorists, the ideas in this book will seem familiar. From Carl Jung to the late popular self-help author Debbie Ford (The Shadow Effect, The Dark Side of The Light Chasers), we have been reminded that to be healthy we need to be whole. Avoiding the negative, covering it up with smiles, positive thoughts, and mindful detachment, may sometimes do more harm than good. This book carefully outlines how constructively accessing our full range of emotions can help us better navigate the complexities of life and social interactions than merely relying on efforts to stay positive. The authors aren't saying that it's bad to cultivate the positive, to meditate and build mindfulness skills, or to look for the silver lining when things aren't going well. They just point out that feelings like anxiety, anger, and guilt exist for a reason. Sometimes they are there to protect us, to alert us, or to drive us to make better choices. They can cause serious problems when they consume us, but their initial purpose is actually to serve us, so it is better to face those feelings than to suppress them.

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