

# **THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW**

**EPISODE 595**

## **Use These Powerful Tools To Strengthen Your Emotional Agility TODAY**

**With Guest Dr. Susan David**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to The Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert Shawn Stevenson and I'm so grateful for you tuning in to me today. There's this powerful statement that says, "Your outer world is a direct reflection of your inner world." Now, this could be a very difficult things to kind of unpack cognitively because we often believe that our life is really what's happening in the external environment. We're taking in all of this data, and it's kind of guiding our internal feedback. The way that we feel, our thoughts, and just being able to navigate through our reality, we're so externally focused oftentimes.

But our external assessment of things is determined by what's happening internally. It's going to be determined by our own experiences, our perceptions, our beliefs, our biases, our habitual thoughts. Dr. Daniel Amen says that we have these ants that could be quote "Automatic Negative Thoughts" or PATs, Positive Automatic Thoughts as well. We're going to have habitual thought patterns as well that are going to determine how we're associating with our external environment. So, on this episode today, we're going to have an absolute masterclass on navigating our internal world, being able to shift and take control of our perspective, to understand our vast array of emotions in a way that you have never heard before.

This episode is literally going to change how you relate to yourself and the world around you in the most remarkable way. And for this mission, we have the very best person in this field, and I guarantee, you're going to walk away feeling exponentially more empowered and capable, and this is also incredible information to share with our friends and family, and also going to learn a lot about being able to utilize these tools and share these tools with the next generation, with our kids, with your nieces and nephews, grandchildren, getting educated about our own psychology is at the utmost importance today.

Now, obviously, one of the things that's left out of the equation, we're talking about emotional well-being and our mental health, and our cognitive ability is our nutrition. And it's so crazy that this is still a soft science in many ways because if we really understand the root of these things, if we're talking about our neurotransmitters communicating and our hormones and our cells being able to do cell stuff, the replication, the production of ATP from our mitochondria, the list goes on and on and on. All of these processes are predicated on food because they're all made from food.

That's how much food matters. And if we're talking about cognitive ability, there are certain foods with a story tradition of being able to improve our cognition in the most remarkable ways, and we have access to those things today versus the synthetic approach where we're trying to hack the system and utilizing things that are far less quality for far less effective

results. Most of the time, if I ever want that little bit of cognitive boost, I'm turning to something that was featured in the Journal of Advanced Biomedical Research, and I found that royal jelly has the potential to improve spatial learning, attention, attention is super important today, and memory. In addition, they found that royal jelly has anti-microbial, anti-tumor, and anti-inflammatory capacity.

Royal jelly has been found to facilitate the differentiation of all types of our brain cells. And top it off, researchers in Japan discovered that royal jelly has the power to stimulate neurogenesis in the hippocampus, the memory center of our brain. If you're like, "What is royal jelly? Is that like Smuckers?" "Is it like..." "I don't think you're ready for this jelly. What kind of jelly is this? Royal jelly is the exclusive nutrition that is provided to the queen bee. And if you didn't know this, the queen bee lives on average 1 to 2 years whereas worker bees live an average of like 150 to 200 days in the winter, and only 15 to 38 days in the summer. So, on average, we'll just say 100 days versus one to two years. Queen bee can live upwards of seven times longer than worker bees, and the developing queen bee is exclusively fed royal jelly. It's been known for quite some time, so much science to support his efficacy and most importantly, it's been utilized for centuries for supporting human health. The royal jelly-based nootropic that I use is from Beekeeper's Naturals. Go to [beekeepersnaturals.com/model](http://beekeepersnaturals.com/model).

And you're going to get 25% off the royal jelly-based nootropic B.Smart. It's called B.Smart. And not only does it highlight the benefits of royal jelly, but it also features bacopa, one of my other favorite cognitive boosters. A randomized double-blind placebo controlled human trial published in 2016 found that after just six weeks of use, bacopa significantly improved speed of visual information processing, learning rate, memory consolidation and even decreased anxiety in study participants. B.Smart is really something special. Head over there, check 'em out, it's [beekeepersnaturals.com/model](http://beekeepersnaturals.com/model) for 25% off their incredible bee products, their super food honey, their nootropics, their lozenges, amazing, amazing stuff. And by the way, they do third party testing for over 70 pesticide residues that are commonly found in bee products that you're simply not hearing about, also making sure that it does not contain other common toxins found in bee products like heavy metals, including arsenic, lead, E.coli bacteria, Salmonella, yeast, all these things that should not be coming along with the benefits that you're trying to get from these incredible products. So, Beekeepers Naturals does things at an entirely different level. Head over there, check 'em out. And now let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

**ITUNES REVIEW:** Another five-star review titled "incredible podcast" by C C Entiana 809. "Shawn is fun, personable, and his science is on point. I'm a biology teacher and a knowledge fanatic. I first became pop after listening to Shawn on Mind Valley when he spoke about water. So glad I found this. It is the best podcast I have come across ever."

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Thank you so much for sharing that review over on Apple Podcast, I truly, truly do appreciate that. And on that note, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day, Dr. Susan David is an award-winning Harvard Medical School Psychologist, and she's the author of the number one best-selling book, Emotional Agility. Dr. David's work has been utilized by some of the biggest organizations in the world, including Microsoft, NASA, Google, Adobe, the list goes on and on and on. She has one of the most popular TED talks of all time, and also, she's been featured in countless major media outlets, Forbes the list goes on and on and on, and she's just been somebody who's been an incredible educator and inspiration for me personally, I've learned so much from Dr. David, over the years, and this conversation is more important than ever. So, let's jump into this interview with the one and only, Dr. Susan David. Dr. Susan David, so grateful to have you here where I can look at you...

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** I know...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** For the first time in person...

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** I'm so excited. It feels like it's been long.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, I think we connected maybe five, six years ago, and I've just been so grateful for your work, especially the last couple of years, just having those tools that you provided me with to be able to analyze emotions and to not kind of stuff 'em down. But one of the first things I want to ask you about is that you share that our external actions or how we show up in the world is driven by our internal emotions, right? When I think that in society, we're taught the opposite, like the external environment is dictating how we feel, so can you help to make sense of that?

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah, absolutely. So, if we think about our inner worlds, our thoughts, we might have thoughts about, "I'm not good enough" or "There's no point in trying." We might have emotions, and we have many different emotions that course through our world's day, emotions, experiences like stress or disappointment, joy, anxiety and so on, and we also have our stories. We have stories, some of them were written on our mental chalk boards when we were five years old, stories about whether we are good enough, what kind of life we deserve, what kind of love we deserve. And as it turns out, how we deal with our inner worlds does drive everything.

It drives how we love, how we come to our relationships, what we share, whether we're able to be vulnerable. It drives how we parent, the way we are able to show up to our children and to help them to navigate their own emotions, it drives how we lead in our organizations and beyond, and of course, it drives our health and our well-being. Because, as an example, when we come home from work, if we are feeling stressed and we are unable to recognize, that, that

stress is about something that happened in the workplace that day, and so we push it down or we're not able to deal with it effectively, that then, we know impacts on our likelihood that we'll sit in front of the TV as an example, as opposed to making effective choices.

So much in our society suggest that it's all about externalities, that if we structure the environment, it's almost this idea that, yes, if we don't like our house, we can paint the walls, if we don't like our car, we can change it, and there's almost this idea that we can change anything by changing externalities. Whereas, actually so much of the kind of life that we have, the kind of love that we have, and the choices that we make is driven by the relationship that we have with ourselves. Now, just to be clear, that's not to say that the external world doesn't matter, we know that systems and policies make a difference.

We know that if we live in a community in which we un-served by public transport and it takes two hours to get to and from work, that's going to impact on our lives and to deny that would be denying reality. So, we know that systems and processes make a difference. We also know that we can set up our immediate environment in ways that are congruent with choices that we want. So, for example, the simplest, most obvious example, is if you're trying to make effective health choices and you go into the kitchen and there's no fruit but that is chocolate, well, your environment is nudging you in a particular direction. But ultimately, the way we navigate our inner world, our ability to be healthy with ourselves, with our emotions, to be connected with our values and who we want to be, this has an outsize impact on everything else.

And in many ways, these ideas of emotions and inner world have historically been pushed to the sidelines. And so, Shawn, I know you speak to a lot of psychologists, and you do a lot of work in the area of psychology, but I'll share with you that when I was doing my PhD in emotions, and I was in a psychology department, I struggled to find an advisor who was willing to supervise me, to supervise my research in the area of emotions. Because even in a psychology department 20 years ago, the idea was that actually, it's about what you can measure, it's about externalities, it's about maybe behaviors, but the whole idea of emotions was seen as being soft, fluffy, intangible. We see this in our organizations where emotions have become feminized and pushed to the sidelines. And one of the things that I'm most excited about of my work and the world we're in right now is there's a radical reawakening and a radical reckoning with this acknowledgement that emotions shape our thinking, our decision-making, and our behaviors, and they're probably the most powerful resource that we can have.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Those the things that determine our lives literally, and to be considered this soft science for so long when it's really the determinant of our reality as a species, it's so fascinating that that's the case, and this is why your work is so important and bringing these things to the forefront. I love the example that you gave of that commute, for example. That

experience of the commute is going to be unique to every single one of the billions of people on the planet based on our perception of things and how we interact with our own emotions, our own internal guidance system. And if you could, you also said the S word in there, you said stress.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And this... We'll put the study out for everybody to see, but one of the best med analyses on stress and the outcomes that it has with our health demonstrates that 60 up to upwards of 80% of our physician visits today for stress-related illnesses. So, it's a huge component in our health outcomes, but you shared recently that even stress itself is largely determined by our perception of that stress.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** So, stress is real, and we know that stress is real, and we know that we live in an environment in which there are greater levels of ambiguity and almost where our technology has outpaced our human ability to deal with those changes. And this places stress on us, and it is another reason that developing these kinds of emotional agility skills become crucial in this world that we are facing into. And so, the example here is, we know that stress makes a difference to people, we know that stress impacts on people's health and well-being, and we know because there's a huge bothness in here. And this is a term that I'm using more and more because this idea of bothness is this recognition that we can hold the capacity to acknowledge stress and it's real impact on people in our one hand, and in the other, we can acknowledge that sometimes, like sometimes I have this experience where I'm like, "Oh, my goodness I'm stressed, I'm stressed," and people in my environment will remind me that actually the stress that I'm experiencing is a good kind of stress because it's stress because things are... Yeah, it feels a lot and it feels overwhelming, but it's because things in some ways are going in the direction that I want. So that's an example of how sometimes, our Lancut non-nuanced view, "Oh, all stress is bad," starts to hide the subtleties.

So, I'll give you some examples of other subtleties in this, the one is the one that I've already mentioned, which is sometimes, the stress is actually values congruence stress. Another example of where stress can be really good is that, generally, when we are moving in the direction of our values. So, what do I mean here? We are making choices that are difficult, but that are congruent with the kind of health that we want, or the kind of relationships we want, or the kind of jobs we want. Often, that kind of change can feel stressful. It's stressful to have a difficult conversation with someone, it's stressful to put your hand up for a new job role because it's taking you in a place that feels strange and new. And yet, stress, that kind of stress that's values concordant, and not just stress for the sake of it, but stress that's values concordant is the fountain of our growth and our connection. And so, one of the things I talk about a little bit in my TED talk is this idea that sometimes people said to me, I just want the

stress to go away. I don't want to be disappointed, I don't want to get my heart broken, I don't want to experience change, and I sometimes jokingly, obviously, I will say those kinds of goals sound like dead people's goals, because dead people never...

I imagine dead people never get stressed, dead people never have their hearts broken, dead people never experience the discomfort of having a new job not working out. We don't get to leave the world a better place or raise a family or have a meaningful career without stress and discomfort. And so I think there's real power in thinking about what is the relationship that we have with stress, and if we are experiencing stress in its unfiltered form as being truthfully, really difficult and really challenging and really having costs, then that becomes an extraordinary and beautiful invitation to also develop some of the emotional agility skills that I speak about, which is trying to understand what stress is sign posting to you and how to navigate that. So, I don't know if that's a helpful direction to go in...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Absolutely.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** In terms of like what does this look like practically but yeah, let me know.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, I mean stress is a sign of life. You said it's so poignantly. It reminded me of The Sixth Sense, I see dead people. Haley Joel Osment, shout out to The Sixth Sense. You don't know what movie I'm talking about, do you?

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** No. I've got no idea what you're talking about. I think...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Bruce Willis.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** I know exactly which movie you're talking about and as you were talking about it, I've got another movie that I'll talk about later, but yeah, but yeah, go for it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This just really shot up for me that... I love this term bothness, because even when I share that stat about upwards of 80% of physician visits being for stress-related illness, it's like, what does that mean? What does stress mean? And it's not just this bad thing because we love labels today, like humanity is so attached to labeling things like this bad, this good. And one of the things that you talk about, and this is one of the great gifts of having someone like you here, is how we attach these labels to ourselves, so even when we are sad, it's just like, I'm sad versus I'm feeling sad, and I want to talk about this, because you've really helped me to articulate this and understand this in a different way, that I am not job, I am not my emotion, I am not my... Even my health status right now, because I've seen this in my clinical work for years, people come in they're so attached to their identity, I'm a diabetic, and it's true,

you have that set of symptoms, but that's become your identity. I'm this, I'm that. You understand what I'm saying?

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes. Yes. I, yeah, I mean, this is a little bit of what I observed when I was in my psychology training doing clinical work, is that labels are extraordinarily powerful. Labels can help us to understand the world, but labels can also become prison, and this becomes very challenging because what can happen is we can begin to over-identify with a particular part of ourselves, such that that part becomes the everything. And I'll give you an example of what I mean. If we think about the core narrative that we have about emotions, even in psychology, in most of the academic articles in the world, it's that emotions are good or bad, they are positive or negative. So, what is bound up in that is the idea that the good emotions are experiences like joy and happiness, positive thinking that these emotions and thoughts are good.

And that when you have other experiences, when you have experiences like stress, grief, disappointment, loss, anger, frustration, any of a thought or story that you might have that these are bad. And so if you think about it, if you have this mental model that some of these things are good and some of these are bad, and then you do something that's called living and living means that your heart is going to get broken, that things aren't going to go according to plan, that sometimes you're going to think you in control of your business goal or your strategy, and then this thing called COVID comes and taps you on the shoulder and laughs in your face and says, "Aha, you thought you're in control, but actually you aren't."

So if you have this mental model, which is that emotions and thoughts are good or bad, and then you do the thing called living, and so what you experience is the truth of living, which is that beauty and fragility hold hands with one another, again come to this bothness that when you love you also open up yourself to having your heart broken, that when you're in a job that sometimes things don't work out in the way that you want, then life demands that you can experience some of the so-called bad thoughts and bad emotions. So, let's take this then to this logical conclusion. Now, not only do you have this idea that you've got good or bad emotions, but you experience a bad emotion, so-called bad emotion, and then what you start doing is you start beating yourself up about having it.

So, in psychology, often we think about type one and type two emotions. Type one is the, I'm stressed, I'm sad, I'm disappointed, I'm angry. Type two is when you start hustling with whether you are allowed to actually experience that experience. I should be, I'm unhappy in my job, but I should be grateful that at least I've got my job. I'm feeling sad, but I'm not allowed to be sad because the world is demanding that, I'd be positive.



And so, then what you start doing is you start layering on shame and blame and judgment, and now instead of being in a situation where you're experiencing the type one emotion, the type emotion, the first experience, now you've got this extra layer of messiness. And so now you're not in a clean relationship with yourself, you're not able to look at that emotion and say, what is this emotion telling me, what's helpful to me here, what's values congruent here, instead, you are in a war with yourself. So, I think that this labeling of good and bad is one type of labeling. The other that I just wanted to connect with briefly because I think it's so important is you mentioned this idea about sometimes what happens is the emotion or the experience becomes our identity, and I think this is really powerful, and I'll give you an example of what I mean here, which is: Words matter, words matter. So often we'll say something like, "I am sad." "I am sad, I am angry." And it's so common place we all do this all the time, like, I am sad. Of course. What else would I be saying?

But if we think about it, when we say, "I am sad," what we are actually saying is, I am, all of me, 100% of me is defined by sadness. And so, Shawn, one of the things that I speak about a lot in work is about the fact that all of us, every single person listening today, we all have beauty and wisdom and compassion and capacity and values and intentions. In the dark of night when we aren't in a swell of anxiety, but rather we kind of get into bed and we are just alone with ourselves, and we tap into the core of who we are as individuals, every single one of us has values and like this kind of deep voice inside of ourselves, that is really what I want to think of as our human wisdom. And when we say something like, "I am sad," there's no space for anything else, there's no space.

If I am angry with my partner or with my spouse, if that emotion is all enveloping, there is no space for, who do I want to be in this interaction? Who do I want to be in this relationship? What are my values right now, yes, I'm angry with this person? But what is the greater goal of how I want to come to this relationship? And so, I often think that when we say I am sad, it's almost like what we are doing is we are saying almost that sadness is a cloud in the sky and we have become the cloud, and what I like to think instead is that there's huge power in naming our thoughts, our emotions, and our stories for what they are.

They are thoughts, emotions, and stories. They aren't a fact. They aren't our identity. They are thoughts, emotions, and stories. So, they are part of us, but they are not all of us. And the way we start getting this beautiful separation so that other aspects of ourselves can come to the fore is when we start noticing them for what they are, and this is what you were reflecting on earlier. I'm noticing that I'm feeling sad. I'm noticing the urge to shut down in this conversation. I'm noticing the thought that there's no point in trying. I'm noticing that this is my "I'm not good enough story."

When you start to notice your thoughts, your emotions and stories for what they are, which is thoughts, emotions and stories, parts of us, but not all of us, what we start doing is we start creating space for other aspects of ourselves to come forward. So, what we're doing when we do this is we move away from, "I am sad, I am the cloud," into recognizing that you're not the cloud. That every single person listening, you are not the cloud. You are the sky. You are the sky, you are human and messy and able and big enough and capacious and beautiful enough to experience all of your thoughts, your emotions, and your stories, and to still choose who you want to be in the space in this moment. You are defined. When you look at the sky, you don't look at a cloud and define the sky by the single cloud, and emotional agility is about moving into the space of being the sky.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Wow. I just love listening to you talk. This is so wonderful and so powerful. Even a term like sadness, there's a spectrum, there's a complete variation of what that can mean for countless people, there's different degrees of sadness, but we tend, again, with this, we take away the big-ness of ourselves and isolated into this one simple test. What can a feeling or an emotion like sadness, what gift can be providing for us? What kind of feedback?

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Oh, my goodness, well, we can do this with every emotion, but let's use sadness as an example, and then maybe we can circle back to stress because the same idea applies. Sadness. Okay, so we look at sadness, and again, the label, the idea of, "Oh, I need to just be positive, I can't be sad" can lead us to hustle with sadness. But let's just settle into sadness, because, of course, we often use what I call very big umbrella terms to describe our emotions. And I'm sad as an example of that. But underneath the umbrella, if I had to say to someone, "What are two options other than sadness that you might use to describe that thing that you're calling sad?" So, the umbrella is sad, but what else might be happening? Disappointed? Grieving? Unsupported? Lost? Confused? There's literally an entire range of emotion, both in label as well as aliveness and intensity of emotion.

So, when you just say, I am sad, that is a very broad brushstroke that doesn't have nuance to it. Now, you might say, "Well, really, you are being very nerdy here. You are really spinning heads about this word sadness, but there is a world of difference between sad and being unsupported, sad, and grieving, sad, and being confused because I don't know how to move forward with this relationship or in my career. So, when you just label something as sad, your body, your psychology doesn't actually know what to do with that because it's so non-nuanced, it's so broad brushstroke. So, I often think of this idea, which is... This word is overused, but I want to use it in this context, which is what psychologists call emotion granularity. Emotion granularity is a superpower. Emotion granularity is where you move beyond the broad brushstroke of what an emotion is and start saying, "But what is it really?" What are two other options?"

So, when we start labeling our emotions more accurately, what it literally starts to do is it starts to help us to understand what is the cause of that emotion, and what do I need to do in relation to it? So, it literally starts to enable what we call the readiness potential in our brains, the part of our brains that starts to mobilize us for action in the direction that is needed. So, this becomes really powerful because if we say I'm sad and I'm stuck in my sadness and my sadness is all of me, there's no space for anything else, but when we start saying something like, "I'm feeling unsupported," you can see that immediately what that starts to do is it starts to say, "Okay, why am I unsupported? Who am I unsupported by? How do I gain and get more support?" And so, this starts to move us from out of our heads and into our lives. Often when people think about emotions and in the work that I do on emotions, they're like, "Oh, is this about naval gazing?" No, it's actually about using this extraordinary power that moves us out of our heads and into our lives, but into our lives in ways that are intentional, and values connected and whole and healthy and grounded. So, Shawn maybe if you don't mind, can I give two other examples?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Absolutely.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** I may be using stress and anger. So, a couple of years ago, I remember doing some consulting work with a... He was a business executive, and he would describe how he was angry, and he would just, "I'm angry, I'm angry, and my team's angry," and he kept on using this word angry and I sort of just said to him like, "What are two other options? You know what else? You seem to be going to this very quickly, what are two other options?" And he started to say, "Maybe I'm not angry. Maybe I'm scared. I'm in a new role. I'm in a new part of my career. Maybe this thing that I'm calling angry is not anger, maybe it's scared."

"And what about your team?" "Well maybe my team's not angry, maybe my team is actually mistrusting, maybe they have had experiences in the workplace that have turned them away from trust, and maybe they are mistrusting." Now, you can see how if you are going into a meeting or I use a work place example here but a have conversation with your spouse, with your loved one, with your children, with your teenager, where your orientation is, "I am angry and the other person's angry," it's a very different conversation than if you are, "I am scared and they are looking for opportunities to build trust."

And it was so powerful a couple of months later, I happened to go out with this individual and a group of people for dinner, and this guy's wife was there and she... They were speaking about this is at the table, and she said like this literally changed their the relationship because he would come home and he would say, "Oh, it looks like you are angry. You are so angry." And she would be, "I am not angry, I'm just tired," or "I'm not angry, I just feel unsupported." So this changes the tone of our relationship, and I want to just lost you circle back to stress, because stress is the most common language that we use when we're having a tough day. But there is

a world of difference between, again, stress and disappointed, stress and then not knowing, knowing feeling that you're in the wrong job, the wrong career, or that your relationship isn't working out. And when you are more accurate with understanding what it is that's actually the emotion beneath this thing that you're talking about, you empower yourself in such profound ways to then actually understand and take action. We begin to own our emotion rather than our emotion owning us.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, that's what it's all about. You're advocating for something that is scary in and of itself, which is introspection. Because today we're so externally focused, there is so much pulling and vying for our attention and so much programming in a sense telling us what we should be doing or what we should be feeling. And because of that, we're not really... We're not often taught the tools that you're teaching to have that ability to self-assess, to pay attention to this... I struggle to even say a word to articulate how powerful and valuable our emotions are when talking to you, but our bodies and our minds are broadcasting this valuable data, but instead we've began to medicalize our emotions rather than having the tools to actually find the gold in there.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes. Yes. Oh, that's such a powerful... As you talk, I'm drawn to the core ideas of Charles Darwin. What has Charles Darwin described? He describes how our emotions have evolved as signals that help us to communicate with ourselves and others, and yet what has happened is there has been a, exactly as you describe, a medicalization of normal emotions, whereas emotions are seen as good or bad, they're seen as positive or negative. One of the greatest tragedies I think of our time, is that these human experiences that are so profound, that are so differentiating, that are so core to our collective consciousness, to our ability to walk through the world have been pushed aside, and it's really interesting. If I can get completely nerdy here, but it's really interesting as to how and why this happens. If we think about the history of emotions, and we think about the history of how emotions have been considered over the past couple of hundred years. I'd love to just play through that emotions have basically become feminized, that emotions have become something that have been associated with emotionality and being female. And there is a history as to where this comes from, which is if we think about education, and we think about historically education being open to males and not to females.

So, what is what was taught in formal education? And I'm talking literally dating back to the Victorian era and before. The things that could easily be taught and that were taught to males, because education was open to males were the math, the sciences, the physics, etcetera. So, you get this false idea that maleness is associated with logic and strategy and mathematics and sciences and all of these kinds of aspects of life, and that being female is associated with the soft stuff, emotions, the stuff that's intangible, the stuff that's fuzzy, and it is a tragedy. And the reason that I use that word, and I don't use that word lightly, is because of this: Firstly,

you see this play out in many different aspects of life. You see for instance in organizations how when organizations started moving through the Industrial Revolution, the idea was that if it could be measured and countered. If it was logical, if it was strategic, therefore it mattered.

And so, there was a whole world where now emotions were seen as being soft skills pushed to the sidelines. And so, you have these awful contexts in workplaces with terrible leaders who have... Well, I don't even want to call them leaders, like people in power are sheltered because they are somehow good at strategy and logic, even though they leave people feeling unseen and hurt and psychologically injured by their actions. So that is one way that you see it playing out. Another way that you see it playing out is that, in schools, what is taught? Mathematics, the sciences, and yet the stuff that's going to help our children walk through life is their ability to deal with the reality of life, difficult emotions, how to manage them.

So, you see this, and then you're also starting to see this even in issues around how children are raised. We know that girls are often spoken to a lot more about their emotions. When a child comes home from school and they've had a tough day when they are... A girl, a female, when the parents, both parents are much more likely to have conversations, but how did you feel today? When a boy comes home from school and has had a tough day, the parent is much more likely to say, "What did you do today? What did you do? Did you win? Didn't you win?" much more task-focused, and then we wonder, we wonder why we're starting to see...

And I don't want to play too much into gender, but you start to see issues around, in some gender different studies, females getting stuck more in their emotions, boys struggling to even identify what their emotion is. You see this play out in life, in relationships, in mental health and well-being. And again, I don't want to play too much into gender because of course, there are so many individual differences and contextual factors and personality, and there's a whole lot of stuff that comes into emotional skills, but I suppose the main point that I'm making is connecting to what you're saying, which is the world conspires in many ways to have us unsee ourselves, to not be in a clean relationship with ourselves. And to then move into an autopilot where we have had these display rules in our families, where we're told what to think, what to believe and how to feel, and the environment, social media, everything is doing the same. And so, it becomes more and more important for us to get grounded in these ideas.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, I mean, you just articulated why we are in the state that we're in where we don't have the tools accessible for introspection, for processing data, or our internal data, which is the most valuable data because it's determining everything we do in life and our experience here.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** On this planet. But this is because it's inundated into us as children. You know, we're indoctrinated with this kind of dichotomy. Again, emotions, good or bad, you know, processing different based on our gender. And we've seen the outcomes of this.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Which is a very kind of fractured society. And I remember, you know, just even the experience of going to high school and, you know, the aspirations like you're set on a track, like you're supposed to do these things.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And even being able to accomplish those things, seeing the vast majority of humans coming out the other side, you know, doing the thing, getting the job, being again, even as I'm talking to you, though, I struggle to label these things so simply, but just for the point of communication ending up depressed, ending up with anxiety, ending up with a vast array of mental health issues, just basically being unhappy, not feeling like life is really what they thought it would be. Right? Because we're following this plan, but we're not able to navigate our own internal world. And one of the other things I wanted to talk to you about, the CDC just published a report this is just a couple of months ago on the resulting mental health crisis among adolescents specifically. And nearly half of all teens analyzed reported that they feel, "Persistently sad or hopeless." And one in five saying that they have contemplated suicide. And this was just, again, resulting from the last two years their experience. So almost half of these teens feeling persistently hopeless.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And sad. But again, what tools have we provided with these children to be able to navigate these things instead of just staying stuck and becoming those things?

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah. And it's so... And there's so many complex factors that impact on depression, anxiety, mental health and so on. It is remarkable to me, however, even in that context, how if you are a child struggling with math, there is no shortage of Khan Academy and its equivalents as beautiful as they are that will help you with that math. If you are a child struggling with feeling bullied or feeling unseen by your parents or feeling lonely or thinking like, "I don't even know what my values are like, what do I even care about?" There, is no Khan Academy equivalent. I mean, I think it's probably one of the most profound opportunities to use technology for good, which is to develop art.

These scalable, learnable tools that actually can help with addressing this. And what you described is exactly right. You know, we know, for instance, that there is something called display rules. And display rules are the kind of rules that we have about our emotions. The example that I gave of like good and bad emotions, like that's an example of a display rule when we live in a society that tells us just be positive, good vibes only it's... If you think positive thoughts like everything else will become attracted to you, what that can do. It sounds so good on the surface, but actually the... It sounds innocuous, but what it can often do is when people then are experiencing difficult emotions, it can lead them into a situation where they feel like they've got a false positivity in a way that's false and in a way that then actually takes them away from these critical messages of emotions which we can explore a little bit later, which is that emotions actually data.

And I think that's really important for us to come to. But you're exactly right. There are these display rules, and we have these display rules in our culture. It was remarkable to me, for instance, how during this pandemic that we went through, we were in the shadow of illness and death. We were in the shadow of illness and death. And for many people, it was one of the most scary experiences, the uncertain experiences, not only the pandemic, but also the fallout in terms of jobs and the economy and just all the stuff that was going on. But it was remarkable to me how even in the shadow of illness and death, you would go on to Instagram on social media and you would see things like, "Well, if you didn't use your time in quarantine to start a business, to dust off your screenplay or to perfect your sourdough bread baking, it's not that you lack the time, it's that you lack the discipline."

You know, it was remarkable to me how even in this context, how the world was saying, "Unsee yourself, don't be compassionate towards yourself, be critical towards yourself, be a taskmaster for yourself." And I'm not trying to kind of take away from the fact that connecting with goals, and of course, all of those things are important. But in a moment where we could instead connect with curiosity, with compassion, with seeing ourselves, instead, the world was saying, "Oh, the display rule right now is find a silver lining. And if you're not finding the silver lining, something's wrong with you."

And don't get me wrong, Shawn now, if you were in quarantine as an example, and I know we're beyond this, but I just want to use this as an example. If you used your time in quarantine to, I don't know, perfect your knowledge of 20th century Scandinavian cinema, all power to you. There's nothing wrong with that. But it is just interesting that we have these display rules that can lead us into a place of unseeing, of unseeing of ourselves. And to go just to where you're moving with this question, which is that this happens in our society, it leads to this forced false positivity, but we also see it in our homes. When a child comes home from school and says, "Mommy, daddy, daddy, daddy, no one would play with me today." We want our children to be happy, and when we see our children in pain, it evokes pain in us. And the discomfort with both

our children's pain and our pain, can lead us to then short circuit the beautiful value that exists in emotions.

So, we'll fail to help our children see those emotions as valuable. And instead, what we'll do is we'll jump to solution. We'll say things like, "No one would play with you today." "Oh, I'll phone the mean girls' parents." "It's fine, I'll bake cupcakes with you." We do this with really good intentions. We like, want to jump in and solve the problem. A child who says, "I didn't get invited to the birthday party." And immediately, we lock your chances. "I didn't get invited to the birthday party. I'm not going to invite them to my birthday party." And immediately we kind of jump into either solution or into dictates. Dictates are where we say, "No, you cannot invite them." Like you be the bigger person. We try to force our children to empathize. We try to force our children towards a particular path. And what I would love to do is to play out what a different kind of conversation it could be, because when a child comes home from school and says, "Mommy, I didn't get invited to Jack's birthday party, and now I'm not going to invite him to mine." What the child is showing is what you were referencing a little bit earlier on, which is this autopilot.

It's like autopilot in a different way. In psychology, we call this fusion. Fusion is when the person over identifies I am, over identifies with the thought, the emotion, the story. So fusion, the example we've already given is, "I am sad, Sadness is all of me, sadness has overcome me. There is no space for anything else." When a child says, "I wasn't invited to the birthday party, I'm not going to invite them." They are showing fusion, so there's no space for choice. There's no space for "Who do I want to be?" There's no space between stimulus and response, that's what fusion is. It's when the story or the emotion or the thought becomes fact and starts to hold the person hostage. And we want to raise children that are able to not fuse. And I'll come back to the alternative of what a conversation could look like but let me play out why we want to raise children who are not fused.

We want to raise children who are not fused, in other words, children who can create space between stimulus and response because our children, when they are 16 years old or 17 years old, are going to be in situations where someone says, "Hey, I've got a great idea. Let's let the air out of the principal's car tires, okay?" Now, your child who's fused with the excitement, the peer pressure. I used car tires as an example, but it could be drugs, it could be something else. That child who's fused, who has no space between, "Is this what I want to do? Is this congruent with my values? Is this truly who I want to be in the situation?" That child is just going to act, "I am tempted; therefore, I am going to do the thing." So, it becomes really important for us to help our children to create space between stimulus and response, so they can make choices. And how do we do this? How do we do this?



Well, connecting very much with a lot of the principles and strategies that we've already spoken about is the first is when we show up to difficult emotions, when where we're not judging them, when we're not saying things like the emotion is good or it's bad, or you're not allowed to feel that way. Instead, we show up to the emotions, in other words, we create space for them. Shawn, I think you might have first discovered my work in my TED Talk, maybe, maybe, I don't know. In my TED Talk, I introduce this very powerful phrase, which is a phrase that is very common in South Africa where I was born, and the phrase is Sawubona, Sawubona, S-A-W-U-B-O-N-A, Sawubona. And Sawubona is a Zulu greeting. You hear it every day on the streets of South Africa, Sawabona, Yebo, Sawubona. It basically means hello. But there's such a beautiful and powerful intention behind the word Sawubona because Sawabona literally translated means I see you.

I see you, and by seeing you, I bring you into being. And it's so powerful. Imagine a spouse, a partner feeling Sawubonaed. And of course, when I'm talking about emotions in this way, I'm talking about Sawubonaring ourselves, being with ourselves in ways that are curious and compassionate, and courageous. And so back to our child, back to our child. The child says, "Mommy, I didn't get invited to the birthday party. Now, I'm not going to invite this person to mine." We want to jump in, and we want to say you've got to invite them, you can't just not invite them. We start with our dictates, we start with our moralizing, always start with our fixing, fixing, fixing. And instead, if we just create space, we just Sawubona, that child is feeling rejected, that child is feeling sad, that child is feeling a lack of belonging.

There is so much pain that that child is experiencing, and if as a parent, we could be present with that, just that, just that is extraordinary. Just that we know in studies when a child is feeling activated and challenged, just that Sawubona deescalates the intensity of emotions. So that's the first part, which is you're not jumping to judge, you're jumping to see, or you're holding space, you're creating space to see. There are other strategies and tools in that context, but I want to pause to just to see if this feels helpful.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. You just said the F word, feels. So, this is another really poignant thing, which is again, when we have these emotions, again, this programming, if we're wondering why we are the way we are as an adult, it's largely programming when we were children and we're just replaying this stuff. And in today's medicalization of our emotions, it's kind of like, even if we have these emotions that we label as bad, you know of anxiety or sadness, it's just like, don't feel that right? We'll do that in various ways, or even here's a... Use a drug so you don't feel that instead of paying attention to... This is what I wanted to circle back to you on. You said these key words that our emotions are data.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right. So, it's like, don't feel that data. We'll mask it with this drug, we'll mask it with this ignorance, ignoring that data.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, let's talk about the heart of it, which is these emotions being data.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Emotions are data. Yeah, and I can speak to that even in the context of this child example, and then we can bring it back to us as adults. So, a core part of my work is that emotions are data. And what do I mean by that? I mean that emotions signpost the things that we care about, emotions signpost the things that we care about. So let me play this with this child example, but then bring it into us as adults. And I want to say us as adults with five-year-old children inside of ourselves, because every single one of us is an adult with a five-year-old child inside of ourselves. So, the child who says I'm angry because when we dig a little bit deeper and we move towards granule levels of emotion granularity that I described earlier, what is beneath that anger? Actually, it's rejection, or it's sadness, or it's something else. Then we start getting to the heart of what's really going on. So that's this labeling and moving that labeling accurately but labeling in a way that's not over-identifying. Then what we start being able to do is to recognize emotions as data. So let me play this through, which is the child that feels sad and rejected.

There is such a powerful conversation in there with the child about... And obviously, this depends on age, but we know that we can even start having these conversations with children as young as two and three years old, children as young as two and three years old who are more able to differentiate between different types of emotions, have greater levels of mental health and well-being, delayed gratification over time for the reasons that I have described earlier, which is, they are more able when they are in front of situations that are tempting or difficult to be able to say, "Is this me? What do I want to do here?" And so on. So, emotions are data, a child who's angry because they feel like they've been rejected, but is able to connect with the sadness, what are the data like what is the need that's being sign-posted? Really, that child... What is the child saying? The child is saying, "Friendship is important to me. Friendship is important to me," is not about the birthday party. The child might be saying, "Friendship is important to me." So as a parent, there's this beautiful door that has been opened to the conversation of what is being a good friend look like? How do you want to be as a friend?

How do you want to come to other people who have been rejected? What you're starting to do is you are starting to recognize... One of the threads that I think is so beautiful in the conversation that we're having is that there's this thread of being grounded with yourself, of seeing yourself, and in that is of seeing your needs and your values, and so your emotions and your child's emotions are actually sign-posting their needs and their values. I remember many

years ago, my daughter coming home from school being super, super, super angry with the schoolteacher because she had been told that she was too young to play on a particular play structure, and she was outraged...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The audacity.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** You know, the audacity that at the age of like six, she wasn't allowed to climb how ever higher because that particular play structure was only open to the older kids, and she was outraged by this, and she kept on saying to me, "It's my body, I need to know how high I can go. It's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair." And she was going on and on and on and on about it. And in fact, not only was she outraged with the teacher, but when I came to collect her from school that day, she was actually yelling at the teacher, and it was her first day of kindergarten, she was like telling the teacher about how outraged she was.

Now, of course, as a parent, you kind of want to jump in and you want to say like, "You cannot yell at your teacher, like that's not okay, go to your room." You know, you want to do all of these things. But the power in the conversation that followed was the power of talking about autonomy, how... There is this like importance in knowing what's important to you, okay, so there is such power in that conversation. We also had power in, again, this idea of emotions as data, my daughter's anger was sign-posting to her that she thought the situation was unfair, that she cares about fairness, she felt that it was not an okay thing, that there was this play structure as an example available, but she wasn't allowed to use it, and we had this really beautiful conversation about it seems like a strong value of yours is fairness, and Shawn, I remember years later, years later she came to me and she said something happened at school to someone else, and she said to me, "And mommy, I didn't like it," and I said so to the other person because I value fairness. And she said that to me, and I was like, so the point that I'm making here is not that I'm...

Because I stuff up all the time with us. All of us as parents are just doing the best we can, but the point that I'm really making here is often what we see is we see an emotion through a display role, you're allowed it you're not allowed it and we moralize about it, but actually, if we can instead see that there's a need or a value that's being sign-posted by that difficult emotion, and if we can ground the conversation in the need or the value, there is something very, very powerful and healthy whole that comes from that. And let me just... I know I'm going on about this but let me play this out about what this looks like in an adult context, which is "I feel bored at work. I feel bored." Imagine someone says, "I'm bored, I'm busy but I'm bored." Boredom is signposting perhaps that you need more learning and growth, boredom is sign-posting a value that you have, and if you just discount that difficult emotion and you say, "Well, I shouldn't be bored, I should be grateful. At least I've got a job." Then you're unpositioning yourself to adapt to your world as it is, and to your needs and your values. Loneliness, we can be lonely in a

crowd, we can be lonely in a marriage, we can be lonely on Zoom call, after Zoom call. Loneliness is sign-posting that we value intimacy and connection.

And we need more of it. Grief, grief. I often think that grief is love, grief is love looking for a home. And what do I mean by that? Grief, if it's the grief of a relationship or the grief of a person is often, I think about my dad who died when I was 15, and often when I move into spaces of grief, it's almost like this person is tapping me on the shoulder and saying, "Remember the times. Remember the lessons. Remember the special moments." So, grief is a kind of an activation that says grief is love, listen to the memories. If it's grief of something that we once had, or grief of a job, or grief of a dream, what that's doing is it's saying that there is something that was in that experience that was important that needs to be surfaced. So anyway, I'm going on about this idea, but it's really important because what it's doing is it's moving us away from the idea of being judgmental about our difficult emotions, instead to moving us into the space of recognizing that our emotions are data with a very, very important caveat here, which is emotions or data, they are not directives.

I'll say that again, emotions or data, they're not directives. Just because I feel sad or angry doesn't mean I get to have it all out in whatever way I want. I needed to have an important conversation with my daughter about how just because you are angry, there's a difference between how we feel and how we act, just because you're angry, doesn't mean you get to yell at your schoolteacher. I can show up to my son's frustration with his baby sister, I can Sawubona it, I can love it, I can see it, I can connect with the values, it doesn't mean that I'm endorsing his idea that he gets to give her away to the first stranger that he sees in a shopping mall. We own our emotions; they don't own us.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I love this so much; our emotions are data not directives. That's so powerful.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** They're data. They're not directives, because again, if our emotions become directives, then we're being fused with them.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Right.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** If we say something like, "I am sad." It's all of me. Therefore, there's no point in trying. Now our emotions have become directives, instead, what we're trying to do is we're trying to say, "I am sad," I'm feeling compassion with the sadness because it's hard to human. What is beneath the sadness? What's beneath the sadness is that I've, for example, got a sense of loss about a dream or something that is important to me, and so now we get to, again, move out of our heads into our lives and say, "In what ways can I be courageous towards moving towards that value?"

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We've got a quick break coming up, we'll be right back. No lifts, no gifts, here are just a few benefits of building muscle seen in peer review studies. Building some muscle mass can significantly improve your insulin sensitivity, improve your overall hormone health, improve your cognitive performance, improve your immune system, protect you against injuries and speed recovery, and defend your body against age-related degradation. This is just a small slice of what a little bit more muscle can do. Now, the barrier of entry to building more healthy muscle and reaching a state of physical fitness is easier than ever. Having a few key pieces of equipment at your house can absolutely change the game for you. Kettlebells, steel clubs, maces, battle rods, all of these phenomenal multi-faceted pieces of equipment are readily available to ship directly through your door. Go to [onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model), and you're going to receive 10% off some of the most premier training equipment in the world.

Simple piece of equipment that you can do dozens if not, hundreds of different exercises with, plus they've got incredible programs as well, to teach you different techniques for unconventional training to truly create more functionality in your health and fitness. On top of all that Onnit is also one of the world leaders in human performance nutrition. It got the most remarkable pre-workout supplements and post-workout protein that you're going to find all sourced from earth grown ingredients, nothing synthetic. They also have put their own products into real-world clinical trials to affirm their efficacy. Again, go to [onnit.com/model](http://onnit.com/model), it's [O-N-N-I-T.com/model](http://O-N-N-I-T.com/model) for 10% off everything they carry.

Now, back to the show. What you're doing you're providing us with a psychological gym to go to build up our emotional agility muscles. And one of these is, right now is tuning into that data, fostering the ability to have compassion, and understanding of that data. In particular what we put in these camps of negative emotions, but maybe difficult emotions, right, so fostering the courage and ability to do that, that's one way of building up those muscles of emotional agility. Another one I want to ask you about is to shift our perspective, to merely shift our perspective, is one of the tools or ways for us to build our emotional agility. What does that mean?

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah, so shifting perspective is not about pretending that the emotion isn't there, just trying to think positive, ignoring. All of those strategies are hustle strategies, and they don't work when it comes to emotions. All of us, every single one of us have had that experience of there's something yummy in the fridge, you're trying to eat healthily, you try not to think about that thing in the fridge, and then all you do is you think about that thing, there is this well-worn psychological principle called amplification. And amplification is the idea that when we try push aside or hustle with those difficult experiences, they don't just go away, they actually have a rebound effect. And so, what I mean by shifting perspective is not a forced false positivity.

Which forced false positivity suggests moving away from that emotion. What I'm suggesting is a turning toward the emotion. A turning toward the emotion to try and understand it, to understand the values that it's pointing to, to understand this thing that I'm calling X, actually, maybe it's really Y. Another really important part of this is compassion. You know, it... I mentioned this before, like this, this I think is a really important shift, which is, we live in a world that suggests that success is A and then B, that there is a clear path between A and B.

What we don't talk about is the in-between space. We don't talk about the messy middle, the space of confusion, that space when you're unsure like should I move into that new career? Is this relationship working out or not? There's this messy middle that is so powerful, and yet our world conspires to there's an A and there's a B, and if you're not at B and you're not at A, then there's something wrong with you.

And I have committed with my team this year to name the messy middle, to name the messy middle because there's such power in saying, "We don't have the answer here, we're in the messy middle." We don't know what it is when we name the messy middle. We give ourselves permission to be in that space and to explore it, and for it to not feel like there's something wrong. Like I'm in the messy middle, like I don't know if I should move house, move Korea, move... I don't know, I'm in the messy middle. And so, when we name that space, I like to think of it as the liminal space, the shadow space, when we name it, it's beautiful. Because if we just give a little bit of space to it and compassion to it, then what we do is we step into being curious, exploring what could it be, there's no shame, there's breathing, there's centeredness, there's groundedness in it.

So, there's a shift, I think, in perspective that happens when you're in confusion, when you're in sadness, when you're in disappointment, whatever, whatever the experience is, when you're in that difficult emotion to actually recognize... I love this like, not to get all kind of Greek philosopher here, but there's this beautiful quote by Heraclitus, who's a Greek philosopher, and he described this idea. He says... Oh, he said, "You can never step into the same river twice." And I love that because, again the world conspires to say the river is unchanging and human beings are unchanging, and there is an A and there's a B, and you've just got to find your path.

But the truth, the bothness is that the world is always changing. The world, being the economic context, the environment, the data, the human beings around us, the relationships around us, the world is changing. And we as human beings are changing constantly. If we weren't there would be something wrong. So, we are changing. And so, what that does is it invites us into the place of recognizing that if we are changing and the world is changing constantly, then the only certainty is uncertainty. And what comes with uncertainty is joy and happiness and all the difficult emotions and all the confusion. And therefore, we can move away from shame of I

don't know the B, and we can say, I'm in confusion, I'm in messy middle. And it's so beautiful, it's so beautiful. And that's where creativity, that's where kind of thinking big, that's where curiosity, that's where growth, that's where learning, that's where real conversations happen. And it's like the most gorgeous space.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, I love that. Such a great philosophy to even live by. Just... You know, because everything is constantly changing and evolving, like every microsecond, even us, you know, and so...

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's so powerful. And I love this ability. One of the beautiful things about human beings is our ability to perspective take, to zoom out, and to imagineer a different way of looking at things, right? And so even with that shift in perspective, it could just be where we're in this kind of base one state where we are the emotion, and just zooming out a little bit and looking at that.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But even from there, because even when you started to share that insight about the shift in perspective, and you said they were compassion, I thought about when I might have a conflict with my best friend, my significant other, my wife, and I have an emotion I'm bringing to the table, and there was a time when I was the emotion, I'm just living in that state to be able to zoom out and look at, "Okay, what's going on here? Why do I feel this way?"

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But then I zoom out another level is well, where I can see, "Okay, what is her emotional state? Why does she feel this way?" And start to kind of imagineer, even though I can't literally walk in her shoes, because we have this kind of statement as well, like walking in someone else's shoes, but we can... We have the capacity...

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes, yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Based on our experience to be able to do some of that, and it kind of breaks apart the inflammation of this situation.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** I think it's so powerful. Perspective-taking is one of our most profound capacities as human beings. Again, when we stuck in the emotion, it's like I am sad, I am a failure, I am angry, there's no point we're stuck in the emotion. And I had the joy a couple of

months ago of actually doing a talk for NASA, where for the first time, I was actually speaking to the people who are experienced this, which is this well-known recognition of what is called the overview effect. The overview effect is this idea that when you go into space, if... When one goes into space one day, but when, people have described when they go into space, how they look back on the Earth, and the Earth is not just this pinprick of blue, and suddenly their sense of self, you feel simultaneously insignificant, but not insignificant, as in worthless, you feel insignificant in that there's so much context now. Because of course, when we're stuck in our difficulty emotion, there is no context. We are the, everything, we ain't actually seeing the world around us, how is the other person feeling? What were they intending? What else is going on? Is the person tired? You know, there's a whole lot of stuff that happens in our context. And so, perspective taking, which is often this overview effect is very powerful, and some of the strategies that I've already given, the labeling of emotion is helping us to...

You know, because what is the core here, the core is that you cannot read the label, when you are stuck inside the jar, so we need to be able to get outside the jar in order to act effectively. So how do we get outside the jar? Well, labeling our emotions accurately is one example. Noticing our thoughts, our emotions, and stories for what they are. Cloud not the sky, is another example, just giving space, giving space for the fact that we are learning. We are growing, we are in the messy metal is another strategy. Another strategy that we often use in psychology, which is just so fascinating is, imagine someone's feeling stuck and they come, and they say to you, "Susan, I don't know what to do at this particular situation, I'm stuck." And you say to them, "Well, what could you do?" And they go, "I don't know, that's why I'm talking to you because I'm stuck. I've got like no ability to problem-solve about this." And it could be problem solving about a relationship or where next to go in one's career, or whatever it is. So, you can have this like back and forth with a person where they're stuck and you're trying to help them to get unstuck, and yet there is this inability to change perspective or to widen perspective.

Then you do something and you say, "I want you to imagine for a moment someone who you believe in, who you trust, who you see as being really wise, and I want you for a moment to imagine that this person, it could be someone you know, like a teacher or a parent, or it could be some other kind of a role model. And I want you to imagine for a moment that this person comes into the room with us, and there is a chair there for this person and this person is now going to give you advice on what you should be doing about this feeling of being stuck." So you have this remarkable conversation, so let me just play this to you, which is the person's feeling stuck and they've had no ability to shift or breathe into or get space or other perspective from this being stuck, and now you invite them to bring another perspective into the conversation, and you say like, "So what would your wise uncle who's now in the room with you advise?" And they'll say things like, "Oh, my uncle will be telling me to do A, B, C, D, E, F and G."



And what's remarkable about this conversation, this imagining conversation is of course, there is no real uncle sitting in the room. All you're doing in this is you are bringing an imaginary alternative perspective into the conversation, and suddenly the individual who's been stuck for weeks is now saying, "Well, you know what the person would advise is that I do A, that I do B, that I have a conversation that I apply for a new role." Suddenly the person who's feeling stuck get unstuck, but it's not because there's a real other individual in the room, it's because they've brought a different perspective into the room. You know, this...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Listen, you don't know this, but for years, I've been doing this, I've never talked about this really. But I picked it up maybe 12, 15 years ago from Napoleon Hill.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Think and Grow Rich.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And he has this concept of your board of trusted advisors and this mental exercise. So, for years, and I still do this. I probably do it like once a week now.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Before I go to sleep, I'll summon my board of trusted advisors. It's usually eight seats, and sometimes, you know, the characters there will shift. But and I'll go around the table and ask them about a particular, you know, challenge or goal or whatever it is that I have going on and their opinion or their perspective on everything. Right? So, we'll go around the table, and usually I do this before I go to sleep, and oftentimes I only get through six of the people, you know, but it's been one of those things where I don't even realize how valuable this has been in my life, you know, having that practice.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** It's so powerful. I love that you shared that, it's so powerful. Because I think what it's doing is that it's again, moving us from the place of stuckness and fusion into the space of values and wisdom. And what's so beautiful about this is that it's all coming from inside you, and I think that this is the essence of... And in fact, this is, this is a world that promises that the solutions are all outside of us. And often when people say like, "Well, what is emotional agility?" And I say, well, I'm going to give the nerd definition, which is about being able to experience all of our difficult emotions with curiosity, with compassion and with the courage to take values, connected steps, and that's the nerd example. The un-nerd example, even though that's not a word. A nerd with the un-nerd example, is it's a part seeing ourselves,

it's about seeing ourselves and seeing the beauty and the wisdom that is inside every single one of us, and I would love if people are thinking about how do I start developing this board of advisors? I would love to do this very quick thing, which is to... For every single person listening right now. One person on your board of advisors is the five-year-old inside of you. We all, we walk through life, and we've got our modern-day armor, our belts and our make-up and our hats and our shoes, and now we've got our modern day armor.

But inside every single one of us there is a five-year-old. There is a five-year-old, and we can imagine our little five-year-old feet, we can imagine the five-year-old going through our household home, actually having a conversation with that wise person in the household home. And there is a five-year-old inside of you. And so, I invite everyone, and I'm inviting myself to do this right now as we're speaking, to ask yourself, "What does my five-year-old need right now? What is my five-year-old inviting me to do right now?" Is your five-year-old saying, "You need more joy, more spontaneity, more creativity?" Is your five-year-old saying, "Be more curious." Is your five-year-old saying that you need more care for yourself. Is your five-year-old saying, "Just see me, hold me, love me." What is your five-year-old saying? Because I think that we have... People might say, "Well, I don't have a board of advisors. I don't have these people. I would suggest that one of the ways we start to develop this is by recognizing that there is a five-year-old that is there that is saying, "See me, love me."

And there is a person on that board of advisors who is maybe 20 or 30 years older than you currently are, maybe 70 years old, maybe 80 years old, maybe 85 years old, maybe 60 years old, 20 or 30 years older than you currently are. There is a person inside of you who is your future self, who is saying, "See me, love me, and these are the things that I need from you." And I think that is powerful because that starts to ground us not just in the moment, but also in the sense that we are a stable being. Yes, we change, yes, the world is changing, but there is a sense of core inside of us that is very powerful, if we will just connect with it and just love it and just see it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Dr. Susan David, you are now my board of advisors, my board of trusted advisors. Thank you so much for sharing that. That just blew me away because I already am implementing it as you're speaking. I'm seeing that and I'm feeling the feelings, it is very, very visceral, and there's so much intelligence that we have within us that just by simply framing things a certain way or asking certain questions it brings it out, and so I'm so grateful for that. And if you could, can let everybody know where they can connect with you more, follow you, get your books on this stuff.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yes. Yeah, absolutely. So, thank you, I just, I love the conversation and it's so beautiful having it in-person. So, my book is called "Emotional Agility" and my TED Talk is "The Gift and Power of Emotional Courage." And then lastly, a lot of people find really powerful and

helpful, I've got a quiz on my website that is completely free, around 200,000 people have taken it, and you can find it at [susandavid.com/learn](http://susandavid.com/learn), and you get a free 10-page report out of that. And then in social media, I try to post, I try to post things that are very congruent and intentional and thoughtful, and I love to engage with people there.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. You do. So much of what you share today is there sprinkled throughout your social media, so. Yeah.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Yeah. I want to use it as a forceful connection.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. It's needed and you're needed. So, thank you so much for hanging out with us.

**DR. SUSAN DAVID:** Thank you. Thank you for bringing these ideas into the world.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's my pleasure. Dr. Susan David, everybody. Thank you so much for tuning in to the show today, that was filled to the brim with some powerful insights that we can all utilize right now and utilize with our families is super important. I can't stress this enough. And even at the end of the episode, and talking about being able to shift our perspective, and the exercise that I shared about consulting with your board of trusted advisors, this is being able to put yourself in another position to get feedback based on your association. This doesn't have to be people that you know directly in your life, this is the key. This can be people that you know from spending time with them via social media or listening to podcasts or a historical figure, somebody that you have an association with, and your kind of would be able to tap into, what would they say? What would they think? What would they do? Right?

And being able to have this board of trusted advisors that you consult with, this is a mental exercise that can give you a different perspective, especially when you're feeling stuck, and this is just one of the capacities that we have as human beings to be able to shift our point of view, but oftentimes, we get tunnel vision. We get psychological tunnel vision seeing things in one way, when you have the ability to see things from multiple perspectives instantaneously. We have access to this at all times, but especially when we're under stress, we tend to resort to our one-track thinking, but we can train ourselves to evolve beyond that, because again, as the statement says, "We don't rise to the level of expectations, we fall to the level of our training."

I appreciate you so much for tuning in to this episode. Make sure to share this out with your friends and family. Of course, you can tag me, I'm @shawnmodel on Instagram and tag Dr.

Susan David as well and let everybody know what you thought about this episode. And of course, you can send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on to share the empowerment, share the education.

We've got some epic shows coming your way very, very soon, so make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

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