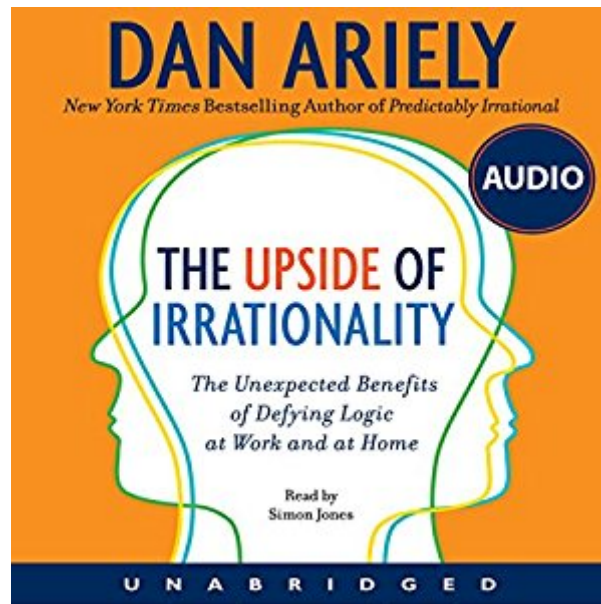


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The Upside Of Irrationality: The Unexpected Benefits Of Defying Logic At Work And At Home



Synopsis

“Dan Ariely is a genius at understanding human behavior: no economist does a better job of uncovering and explaining the hidden reasons for the weird ways we act.” James Surowiecki, author of *The Wisdom of Crowds* Behavioral economist and New York Times bestselling author of *Predictably Irrational* Dan Ariely returns to offer a much-needed take on the irrational decisions that influence our dating lives, our workplace experiences, and our temptation to cheat in any and all areas. Fans of *Freakonomics*, *Survival of the Sickest*, and Malcolm Gladwell’s *Blink* and *The Tipping Point* will find many thought-provoking insights in *The Upside of Irrationality*. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his latest book, Dan Ariely takes another look at some irrational behavior of humans. I am not sure that there is an upside to all the different irrational behaviors he explores. You could make the case that by becoming aware of our irrational behavior and understanding better where it comes from, we might be in a better position to make appropriate changes. My point is I am not sure the title is indicative of the subject matter. I found the book fascinating. At times I thought that he might be going into too much detail or dragging the story out a bit too long. But as I finished reading the book, I found that the lessons were sticking with me. I suspect that his teaching and writing techniques are highly developed and his approach is one that will leave the greatest impact on the student or reader. There are several important concepts that he explores in this book. One subject I truly enjoyed and learned from was our innate desire for revenge. To illustrate the point, he told

about his unfortunate experience with the purchase of an Audi automobile. At one time or another most of us have felt taken advantage of by a large company with rigid rules and procedures. I strongly felt his sense of outrage toward Audi. And while the story is a great example, I also feel sure that he is getting some revenge by telling how horrible their customer service can be. I am certainly not their ideal prospect but based on the story, I would never consider buying an Audi. I do believe that social media has leveled the playing field and given the average consumer a way to lash back. But as he points out in the book, revenge is a hollow victory and when we get consumed in seeking it, we generally lose.

Dan Ariely's "The Upside of Irrationality" is subtitled "The Unexpected Benefits of Defying Logic at Work and at Home." A more apt title would have been "Predictably Irrational--the Sequel," since this book comes across more as a follow-up to Ariely's first book ("Predictably Irrational--The Hidden forces that Shape Our Decisions") than a presentation of completely new material. The author, who is a behavioral economist, recounts a series of experiments that he and his colleagues conducted to explore such questions as: What makes work meaningful and, conversely, what can make it dull and unsatisfying? Why do people procrastinate? How does a person's self-image influence whom he chooses to date? Why is revenge so sweet even though it "has no more quenching effect on emotions than salt water has on thirst"? In what ways do our emotions impel us to make self-destructive decisions? In Chapter Eleven, "Lessons from Our Irrationalities," Ariely sums up his thesis succinctly: "Our cognitive biases often lead us astray, particularly when we have to make, big, difficult, [and] painful choices." The author brings his point home in a poignant manner when he discusses what happened after he incurred third degree burns in an accident. In order to reduce his pain and the number of surgeries he would have to undergo, his doctor recommended the amputation of his hand and forearm. Dan says, "I decided to hold on to my poor, limited, eviscerated limb and make the best of things." Now he wonders if he made a mistake: "I was not so rational, and I kept my arm--resulting in more operations, reduced flexibility, and frequent pain.

Behavioral Economics has been an expanding section of bookstores for a few years now, and a lot of the books coming out are thought-provoking and intelligent. This one makes the others look better by comparison. I have global complaints, like the plodding pace of the writing, the confusing way in which some of the experiments are presented, the odd withholding of information (at one point the author declines to explain the difference between two different auction styles, citing the complexity, but they must have been able to explain each style to the participants in order for the

experiment to work), and such. Even if the experiments themselves were done well, this would be a major reason to avoid this book, even for someone doing a thorough reading of the lay-literature of Behavioral Economics. Then there's some nitpickier complaints, like how the author feels compelled to mention the horrible injury, and arduous healing process, that he suffered years before. While I do understand that this was a major life event for him, and in fact got him started in the field, it's unclear what it adds to the book to mention it every chapter. He's also compelled to mention his other book repeatedly, just in case we missed the fact that this is his second book, even though this one doesn't build on the last one directly. The major failing of this book, though, is the experiments themselves. And, for reasons of sensationalism and piling on the bandwagon of complaining about the 2008 financial crisis, one of the most flawed experiments leads the book.

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