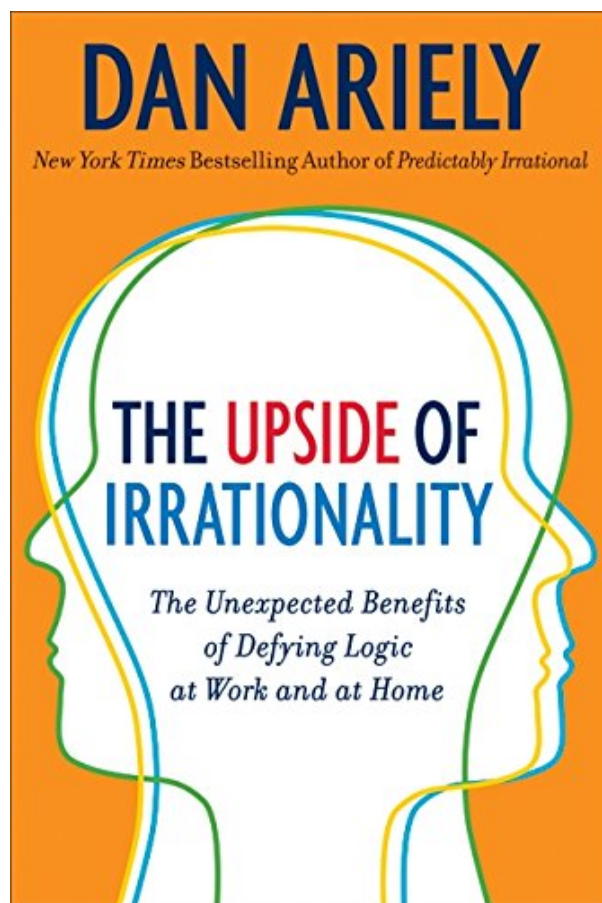


# **THE UPSIDE OF IRRATIONALITY: THE UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OF DEFYING LOGIC AT WORK AND AT HOME BY DAN ARIELY**



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# DAN ARIELY

*New York Times* Bestselling Author of *Predictably Irrational*

A stylized profile of a human head facing left, composed of three overlapping lines in blue, yellow, and green. The head is white against an orange background.

## THE UPSIDE OF IRRATIONALITY

*The Unexpected Benefits  
of Defying Logic  
at Work and at Home*

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# **THE UPSIDE OF IRRATIONALITY: THE UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OF DEFYING LOGIC AT WORK AND AT HOME**

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“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*.

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- 352 pages

### Features

- Great product!

### From Publishers Weekly

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159 of 170 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating look at human behavior

By John Chancellor

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.

There are numerous other concepts involving irrational behavior that he explores. One is our tendency to make rash decisions under the influence of emotions and then to continue to make decisions which are consistent with the emotional based decisions long after the emotional feelings have faded. We can become victims of our own emotional decisions.

Dan tells plenty of very personal stories in this book. You get to know him very well ... at times you get to share in-depth some very personal painful experiences he has gone through. It makes him very real. He is extremely open and transparent in this book. You will probably find it difficult to read about some of the pain he experienced during the recovery from a terrible accident. But there are some very valuable lessons imbedded in the stories he tells.

I immediately found myself using some to the lessons in this book in my work helping others. One very important lesson involves what we get from work. He told the story of a book editor who completed the task of editing a book and was paid the agreed price. She was then told by the publisher that he had decided not to publish the book. On a rational level, it should have made no difference. But she was highly disappointed. The lesson is we want/need both the material compensation from work and the feeling of contribution we get from work. Without the feeling that what we do matters, we are left with an emotional letdown.

There is an interesting chapter on why online dating does not work and another chapter on how compensation is a poor motivator. Reading this book will give you a much better understanding of human behavior.

The book is very easy to read. It is written in a totally conversational style. Dan has the rare gift to take a complex subject and present it in easy to understand concepts. His approach to writing is somewhat different but I believe highly effective in terms of understanding and retention.

As Daniel Goleman pointed out in his books Social Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence, so much of our success is dependent on our social and emotional intelligence - not our IQ. This book will help you improve your social and emotional intelligence.

53 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

"We need to know our limitations."

By E. Bukowsky

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."

Although this book breaks little new ground in a popular field crowded with similar works, Ariely's personal account of his ordeal, including the excruciating physical and occupational therapy that he endured, make for compelling reading. When Dan admits that he agonized over his ability to find a woman to love as well as a



satisfying job, we cannot help but empathize. "The Upside of Irrationality" offers a much-needed reminder that we can never totally eliminate our subconscious biases. At best, we can remain cognizant of our irrationality, and make use of our self-knowledge to optimize our chances for success and happiness.

109 of 129 people found the following review helpful.

flawed and plodding

By Silea

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. In short, in an attempt to show that paying financial experts huge bonuses actually harms their efficacy, they show that paying random passers-by huge bonuses for tasks totally unrelated to their actual profession harms their efficacy. There are several marked differences between the experimental subjects and the bankers to whom the author would like to generalize the results (no, i'm not arguing that bankers are 'special' as the author claims his banker friends often do, just that they're businesspeople and random people on the street in India probably aren't, if they're wandering down the street in the middle of the day and have the time to stop and do the experiment). There are several marked differences in the way the bonuses were offered, whether they were expected, how the bonuses related to the tasks, etc. Basically, either the author totally failed to convey how the experiment was actually related to his conclusion, or he took an experiment only tangentially related to the topic and claimed it was related in order to lead his book with a chapter about the 2008 financial crisis.

Other experiments, while less flawed, are just pointless. For example, he showed that if someone's rude to you, you're more likely to take an opportunity to punish them than you would be if they weren't rude to you. (Shocking, i know, but he has the data to back up the claim.)

Another great sin is that the author only rarely follows through on the promise of the subtitle. There are dribs and drabs of comments on how being irrational can be beneficial, but more often it's simply observations that humans aren't, in fact, machines of pure reason that always seek the greatest gain for the least effort. After a few requisite digs at how Rational Economists totally fail to actually predict human behavior, this 'oh, and check that out, people aren't perfectly rational!' mantra gets redundant.

If you like books on Behavioral Economics, read Freakonomics and SuperFreakonomics. They are better

written, with better data and better analysis. And if you've already read those two, stay well clear of this one, as you'll find it vapid, slow, frustrating, and poorly written when compared to those.

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