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EKVILIBRO®

Elena Lvova

**Game Ekvilibro.
Philosophy of Balance**

«Издательские решения»

Lvova E.

Game Ekvilibro. Philosophy of Balance / E. Lvova — «Издательские решения»,

The authors discover a unique and simple game formula for achieving balance and stability in life. The book, written in a straightforward manner with a generous dose of humor, is suitable for all readers.

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Game Ekvilibro Philosophy of Balance

**Elena Lvova
Oleg Lvov**

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PART 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME EKVILIBRO

Game Ekvilibro

What is the Ekvilibro Game?

Some will say that the Ekvilibro Game is not a game at all, but a new psychological method or theory based on exploring opposites, synonyms, and antonyms. Not exactly. The Ekvilibro Game is not only a method.

To work with it, you don't need to:

- Meet with a psychologist while nervously eyeing the ticking clock;
- Possess Cicero's eloquence on demand, so that in a state of mild trance and panic you can accurately describe what you felt in the sandbox at age five and how it relates to your current boss.

You can play it one-on-one with yourself. Alone. In solitude. In silence. In your favorite slippers. You can name your feelings playfully, describe them calmly, and choose their opposites. With no rush — using dictionaries, hugging Google, and without fearing that your search query «what does it mean to feel existential longing» will end up in your colleagues' recommendations. You can even choose not to «play» at all — simply select a chapter below that interests you and read it thoughtfully.

Some people, having glanced at the Game, will condescendingly conclude: «Yes, it's not a psychological method, but rather a form of self-development.» And again — yes and no! Because self-development is serious business, which typically implies:

- Hard work that makes you want to cry into your pillow in the evenings;
- Complex philosophical speculations;
- Obstacles on the path that must be overcome heroically;
- And, most importantly, finding time for all this in your schedule — somewhere between work, sleep, and procrastinating in front of the TV.

The Game is not self-development in the tedious sense we're all used to. Its goal is not to lead a person to spiritual enlightenment, material abundance, or sensual bliss while fighting the dragons of inner demons, like in the Brothers Grimm — only without the happy ending. This is not a path where we move from point «A» (total failure) to point «B» (conditional success) via an extremely complicated zigzag — maybe crawling there ten years later — toward a destination we didn't even clearly imagine at the start.

The Game is a kind of telephone line to your inner Self. Not a smartphone packed with apps tracking your productivity, but a good old rotary phone that is always within reach. A phone that, playfully, lets you hear yourself clearly — without interference and without the advice of «those who know» — and then go on living more calmly. Not to become perfect, but to gain stability here and now, accumulating little drops of self-understanding. In the Game, points A and B are very close — within arm's reach. But by covering many such short, simple stretches, we develop. Without heroic effort and strain. Almost by accident. As if by simply playing, we change the way we think.

Thus, the Ekvilibro Game is something greater than just a psychological method that makes you drowsy, or a self-development path demanding asceticism in the spirit of «give up all sweets.» Philosophically, the Game helps you find that balancing point between extremes — the central, neutral position (zero) from which adequate action and meaningful movement become possible. That is the core task of the Ekvilibro Game. By finding the neutral position, we free up our unconscious for growth and discover skills we didn't know we had — skills that help us live with dignity in a modern world where artificial intelligence already controls everything. The game allows you to discover exclusive talents within yourself, which, unlike hard and soft skills, are not available to AI. These are talents that are within each of us.

Between what and what do we search for a neutral position — a point of equilibrium? Imagine the balance point between:

- Good and Evil (when you want both to save the world and to strangle your neighbor).
- The spiritual and the material (between meditation and shopping).
- The individual and the collective (between «I want to move to a deserted island» and «What will people think?»).
- Reason and emotion (between «logic says» and «panic suggests»).

At its core, the Game can help a spiritual person become more materially grounded and earn money — despite the fact that, for some reason, the main «sign of spirituality» in our world is often poverty. It can help an overly emotional person pause and engage their reason before making an important decision — not afterward, when the realization arrives: «Oops... I think I messed things up.» It can help a communist become a little more capitalist (and vice versa) without triggering an ideological crisis. It can help resolve an apparently insoluble conflict in relationships, including with children — when the dialogue hits a dead end between «Why didn't you do your homework?» and «I forgot.»

The Game provides a safe space where you can try on different roles without obligations and without the guilt afterward. And most importantly: by rewiring your psyche to seek equilibrium between dualities, you free the unconscious and discover unique abilities and talents. People around you will say: «This person knows what he's talking about and knows where to go and how to move. He's a leader.»

Exclusive Talents

Let's return to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Almost all hard skills are already available to AI-based robots. Soft skills, too, are often used more effectively by AI, which finds solutions flawlessly by analyzing the knowledge of all humankind.

The Ekvilibro Game helps free the unconscious. The unconscious takes on the form of the conscious. It allows you to sublimate and release abilities that are in a latent state. Many people don't even suspect these inner capabilities, yet it is vital to work and uncover EXCLUSIVE TALENTS within yourself. We are no longer talking about hard skills or soft skills that are easy to algorithmize, but about meta-skills related to consciousness, context, and complex systems — human knowledge at the intersection of meaning, emotional intelligence, and intuition.

Here are the exclusive talents that are coming to the forefront today that many people don't even know about:

1. Context management: the ability to create and sustain a field of meaning in which decisions are made. This is not goal-setting, but shaping the «world» in which those goals matter. AI can analyze data, but it cannot create a living, inspiring context.

2. Decision-making under «non-computable» uncertainty: when there is no data, no precedent, and there is a «gray zone» of ethics, intuition, and long-term consequences. This is the skill of working with situations that cannot, in principle, be algorithmized.

3. Integration of heterogeneous realities (synthesis): the ability to see a whole made of seemingly unrelated parts — engineers' data + customers' emotions + a political trend + an ethical dilemma. AI analyzes, but synthesizing genuinely new knowledge is the domain of a higher-order human intellect.

4. Meaning-making and legitimation: answering the question «Why are we doing this?» for a team, a market, society — at a time when «what to do» and «how to do it» are increasingly delegated to machines. This is the skill of being «chief meaning officer.»

5. Existential resilience: the ability to maintain clarity of mind, calm, and composure in the face of chaos and pressure. This isn't about stress management, but about a deep inner core that allows you to feel stable, no matter what's happening around you.

These are precisely the skills that become «Ekvilibro»: the art of holding balance not between work and life, but between contradictory forces, paradoxes, and the short-term and long-term in business and in life. While most people worry about learning Python or prompt engineering (which also matters), true value — and true invulnerability to AI — shifts toward deep human thinking, ethics, meaning-making, emotion, and existential resilience. The Ekvilibro Game helps develop these qualities regardless of age.



The purpose of the Game is not to become perfect, but to stop swinging between extremes and find your own stable point of support — so that life resembles not a roller coaster, but a pleasant journey with a compass in hand that clearly points to your exclusive talents.

In the book, you will find a short course in Emotional Intelligence — precisely what distinguishes us from robots. You will learn to correctly understand and name emotions, finally distinguishing «anxiety» from «just a bad mood because you didn't sleep enough.» You will find many practical situations that help you «here and now.» You will be able to describe your current states more clearly, which means you will choose opposite meanings not merely as a set of words, but as a set of emotions and feelings. By describing your current state and choosing antonyms (duality) to describe the opposite state, you will learn to balance these two states and move into a state of equilibrium.

Opposites

The game is based on opposites: synonyms and antonyms, which we last used seriously in school essays. Through curiosity and experimentation, the Game offers real-life supports: it does not deny opposites, but finds that «golden mean» — equilibrium. Leaning on them — on these two legs (or arms, whichever you prefer) — we finally stop staggering through life and gain wholeness and stability; we feel and discover our exclusive talents. The game is suitable for absolutely anyone who wants to find peace, be more effective, find meaning in life, and stabilize their emotions without resorting to medications with three pages of side effects.

So opposites — such as black and white, light and dark, good and evil — are the basis of our Game.



Here are the simplest examples:

Good vs. evil

These are moral reference points without clear frameworks and laws. Each of us has our own definitions of good and evil, shaped from early childhood, and they may differ greatly from person to person, from man to woman. If the boundaries of «evil» are not defined between two or more people, it is hard to build trust. What one person considers good may be the greatest evil for another — and vice versa. Recall the fairly common saying: «If he hits you, it means he loves you.» For

someone, that, too, may be «good,» not «evil.» Excessive moralizing, however, deprives relationships of flexibility. Evil cannot be absolute; neither can good.

Individuality vs. community

Individuality is characterized by self-realization; community — by belonging to a group. Too much of the first, and you are a lonely genius with a cat and the suspicion that all people are bio-robots. Too much of the second, and you are a cog in the system who happily shouts «Corporate party!» on Fridays while crying inside. If a person is a conformist, their life and judgments will be based on irritation toward individualists. The reverse is also true: the lone rebel sees office workers as zombies. Only recognizing both dualities leads to balance. Understanding that maximum self-realization is possible only within a collective — but a collective that respects your individuality — is priceless. Unfortunately, most business structures prefer either «team spirit» (read: groupthink) or the chaos of brilliant loners who forget deadlines, inspired by the muse.

In relationships, this duality can be described as autonomy vs. attachment. Independence provides stability; attachment provides support. An independent person is often lonely and seeks support. A person in a relationship often seeks independence. The ideal is when you can sit silently together in opposite corners of the room — and it counts as quality time.

Order vs. chaos (predictability vs. creative spontaneity)

If we believe the modern theory that the universe emerged from the Big Bang, Earth and all planets came out of chaos. Without that explosion, there would be no planet and no us. Everything is created from chaos, including order — which, in turn, generates chaos. Order cannot produce innovation because no one wants to consciously break it. Chaos cannot implement innovation in real life. You cannot have one without the other. Of course, these concepts are personal: for someone, a cluttered desk is creative disorder; for their spouse, grounds for divorce.

Tradition vs. innovation

If a person adheres to traditional values, they preserve their meaning — sometimes understandable only to themselves. Often traditions are simply neurotic rituals that stall development. If another person loves only innovation, they develop — but superficially: today they learn crypto, tomorrow pottery, the day after Ayurveda, and in the end they can do nothing except speak beautifully about their «growth.» Tradition is a kind of order; innovation is always connected to chaos. Without roots, without tradition, innovation is shallow; without novelty, traditions freeze and lead to degeneration. You must always seek balance.

Reason vs. emotion

Decisions made on emotion or intuition can be wrong. The probability of being right tends toward zero as emotionality increases. Decisions that ignore emotions and rely only on reason depend on the correctness of the initial data analysis. As we know, there is never enough initial data. Analysis cannot be exhaustive if the data contains countless exceptions and assumptions. Brilliant decisions are made at the intersection of these opposites.

Simplicity vs. complexity

Rules that are too simple are like «just add water» instructions — until you realize the result resembles the water itself. Complex models are as precise as Swiss watches, but just as fragile at the first question: «Why is it like that?» People would rather nod at a sophisticated theory than admit they didn't understand a word. Mastery lies in the ability to convey complex information in a simple form.

Risk vs. safety

«No risk, no champagne,» people say. However, an unreasonably high risk can make even the cheapest champagne unaffordable.

Rights vs. obligations

Freedom is only useful when it's backed by responsibility. Give an irresponsible person freedom, and the rights of others will be violated. They themselves may even commit such acts that society will curtail their rights. A happy medium must be found in everything.

Work vs. rest

Productivity requires recovery. Efficiency is rhythm, not constant maximum. Push yourself too far, and life mercifully provides an unscheduled «vacation» in the form of a cold or burnout. Picture a sine wave and live by its rules. Everything else leads to emotional burnout and psychosomatic problems.

The material vs. the spiritual

Here we can speak of the comfort and safety of the material versus the meaning and values of the spiritual. An excess of one will always devalue the other. Simply put: material abundance blocks spiritual development, and lack of money stimulates it. A person who considers themselves spiritual often can't earn money but sincerely believes their spirituality is a «competitive advantage.» On which market exactly is unclear — apparently, in an invisible competition of «who is less attached to the mortal world.» Meanwhile, a person with money and power looks at them with longing, thinking: «If only I had their enlightenment... and a few million in the bank.» It's like a debate between a yogi and an investor: one seeks zen in asanas; the other — in assets. Those with money and power are often unhappy; interestingly, a spiritual person without money can't be called truly happy either — at minimum, they have to observe this imperfect world and suffer. The recipe is equilibrium: progressive development of both dualities — meditate, but on a comfortable cushion; earn, but don't forget why.

Control vs. trust (straight out of management)

Control is when you trust an employee, but still check what they're breathing. Result: initiative is punished and creativity is buried under piles of reports. Total trust is when you let the team work independently and, a month later, discover they've renamed the company and introduced the role of Chief Wizard. Balance? Trust — but also set reminders in the shared chat — every half hour.

Local vs. global thinking

Accounting for context in local thinking versus forming a systemic picture in global thinking. Decisions made without context resemble trying to cook dinner from an online recipe while ignoring the fact that you don't have half the ingredients and the oven is broken. It is impossible to make a balanced macroeconomic decision without grounding in microeconomics — and vice versa.



Intimacy vs. secrecy

Openness brings people closer, of course. But if you open everything, you may find your soul has been read like a book, put on a shelf, and forgotten. Personal boundaries are like a fence with a gate: so guests can enter — but cannot tour your basement, where you keep skeletons, an old guitar, and childhood poems.

This list of opposites can be continued endlessly. The key is that only by leaning on them can we be happy and effective. Ignoring one duality means depriving ourselves of the second point of support. A reasonable person would never decide to give up one leg in favor of the other, or — being right-handed — lose their left arm because «you can still do a lot with the remaining one.» And yet many people rely only on reason and ignore emotions and intuition. Some leaders put on a controlling mask and try to control everything and everyone, trusting no one. People «amputate» an arm or a leg from themselves and then say: «Something went wrong.» We ourselves create our lives by standing on one pole of a duality — and we reap the corresponding results.

We need to learn to stand on both legs — to evolve. Of course, you can continue to crawl like a baby, or move on all fours like a quadruped, but evolutionarily, an adult still walks on two legs. It also looks more presentable.

For example, by relying only on positive emotions, a person tries to ignore negative ones. But negative emotions are like uninvited guests: if you won't let them in through the door, they will climb in through the window. And it's good if it happens without psychosomatic consequences. On the other hand, if a person lives in negativity all the time, they can drive themselves into a nervous breakdown. If someone tells you they always feel only joy and delight, something is likely off — or they're deceiving themselves. We'll discuss emotions and emotional intelligence in more detail below.

More examples. If a monk considers themselves a spiritual person with a capital «H» (Human), then by definition everyone else is a lowercase «h.» By separating from society, they risk separating from the material and physical benefits that exist precisely there — and sitting on a mountaintop, contemplating space for the rest of their life. Though for some, that is the point. If a perfectionist rejects chaos in any form, order will «break» them the moment something goes wrong. And it will.

During the Game it becomes obvious how inconvenient it is when, say, the «good» leg is longer than the «evil» leg. Someone who is «good» at 10 points and «angry» at 1 point — rejecting anger in all its forms — should be prepared for a «blow of fate.» Even anger at 2 points on their own scale may knock them off their feet.

And standing on one leg of «altruism» is a quest of its own. The Game helps strengthen and synchronize the legs of duality. If you want, you can «start dancing» — even if at first it's the «Dance of the Little Ducklings,» not a passionate tango.

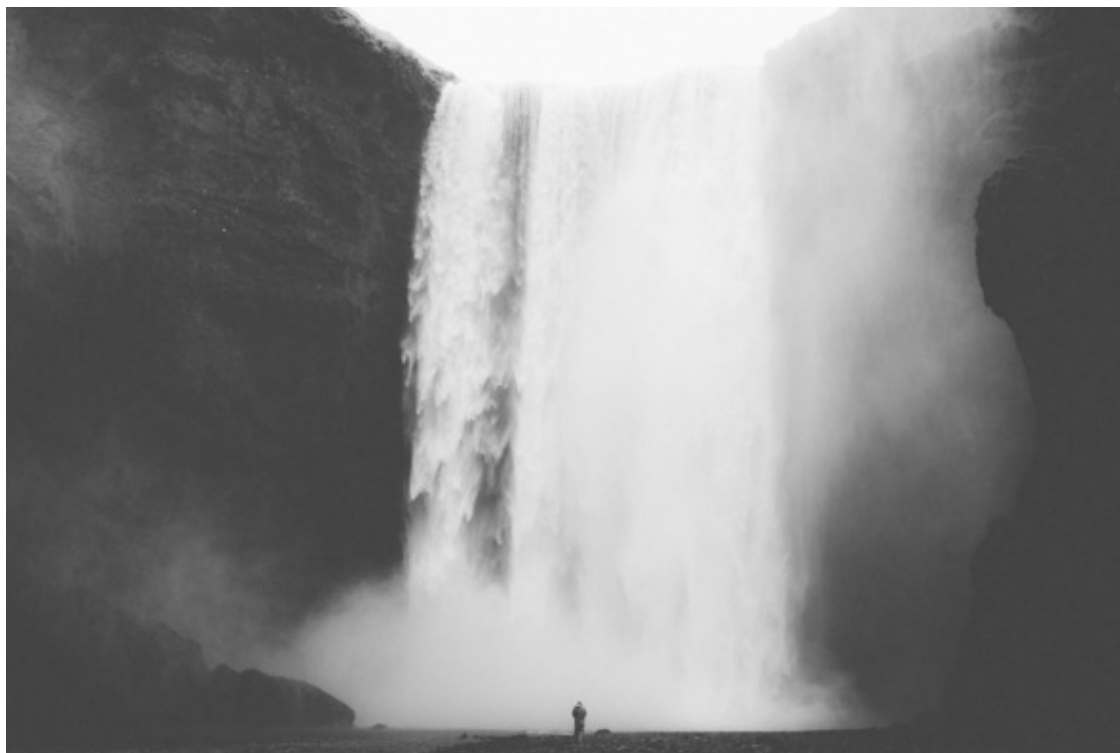
Finding Opposites

First you need to define and name your current emotional state as accurately as possible — using any word, feeling, or emotion — and only then choose the corresponding opposite.

For example, «weakness.» We often feel weakness: physical, moral, weakness in the face of events (fate, as some call it), and so on. It is crucial to determine what exactly your weakness is, what causes it. There is no other way than to select suitable synonyms and choose the most accurate one. Synonyms and near-synonyms might include: powerlessness, exhaustion, depletion, debility, being run-down, lethargy... And their antonyms: strength, power, might, endurance, resourcefulness, authority, will...

Strength and weakness are two sides of the same coin. We never become stronger without knowing our weaknesses. A person who refuses to acknowledge vulnerability resembles someone trying to build a house without a foundation: at first everything looks impressive, and then the walls crack in the first wind. To admit «I need help» is an act of enormous inner strength — available only to those who have stopped pretending to be Superman. If we deny weakness, we automatically deny strength as well: why would we need it if we're already «cool»? That sense of self-importance usually ends with: «I didn't know it would turn out like that.» Allowing yourself to be weak is the first and most important step toward becoming truly strong. Recall the words: «My strength is made perfect in weakness.»

Weakness can have many emotional shades. Each shade is linked to a particular emotion: fear, sadness, sorrow, grief. By accurately identifying the key emotion behind your weakness, you become stronger almost magically. By integrating these emotions into your personality instead of waving them away, you gain resilience. And now you are no longer someone who can be broken by missing a bus, but a person capable of meeting any trouble with a smile and a couple of backup plans. And yes — you don't lower your head. Unless it's to check how firmly you're standing on your feet.



To be resilient and effective, we need to sense and feel the emotional component of our current state. That is the foundation. Once we truly feel our state, we can choose synonyms more precisely — not merely based on language syntax or a synonym dictionary. We're playing «guess the word,» not with a dictionary, but with our own soul. For example, behind «fatigue» there may be a «desire to slow down,» and behind «indecision» a «careful attitude toward choice.» Perhaps our «weakness» is simply a wise signal that it's time to rest? Strength needs softness, and confidence needs doubt in order to remain alive and real. The main secret of the game «Equilibro» is not achieving perfect balance, but the ability to surf the waves — with ease and curiosity.

PART 2. EMOTIONS



Emotions

Human beings are emotional creatures. In its most clichéd form, it sounds like this: «It was complex emotions and feelings that made humans human.» Hard to argue with that. To reinforce what already seems obvious, we can turn to quotes:

«The first step toward change is to become aware of your emotion, your worn-out program. Ask yourself: what thoughts do I want to activate in my brain?» — Joe Dispenza

«To act intelligently, you need more than intellect.» — Fyodor Dostoevsky

«The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from everywhere: from the sky, from the earth, from the rustle of paper, from fleeting forms, from a spider's web.» — Pablo Picasso

«Suppressed emotions don't disappear. They've been silenced. And they continue to influence a person from within.» — Sigmund Freud

«For effective functioning in today's world, it is necessary to develop emotional intelligence, the heart of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.» — Klaus Martin Schwab

«Emotions make us human. They make us who we are.» — Robert Kiyosaki

«Let us not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives, and we obey them without realizing it.» — Vincent van Gogh

«Between stimulus and response there is always time. In that time we choose how to respond. And in that choice lies our freedom.» — Viktor Frankl

Reading these aphorisms, you can understand quite a lot about emotions — almost everything, broadly speaking. But humanity is not prepared to stop at «broad strokes»: we classify everything. That is why a modern theory of Emotional Intelligence was born at Yale University (USA).



Let's start in order. To identify our emotions and emotional states accurately, we need to know them and label them correctly. And, as you'll agree, this is not always easy — sometimes it's simpler to assemble furniture from an instruction manual than to make sense of your own feelings.

The first person to define emotion — strange as it may sound — was Charles Darwin. While developing his theory of evolution, he carefully studied mammals' reactions and noticed that biologically primitive animals display remarkably similar responses to the same environmental stimuli. For example, when a weaker animal encounters a stronger one, the former produces a highly predictable reaction. This reaction helps it assess the situation and pushes it toward flight or attack, increasing its chances of survival. (Although, of course, it's hard to estimate the survival chances of a small mutt barking at an elephant — but as they say, every era has its heroes. Let's leave this scientific oddity in parentheses.)

So, this animal reaction is nothing other than the emotions of fear or anger. Darwin established that all mammals possess primitive, or basic, emotions. In humans, however, emotions evolved and became quite complex — growing into feelings. Now we don't merely run from a saber-toothed tiger. We can simultaneously be angry at our boss, feel sad about the rain outside, and secretly rejoice that a meeting was cancelled. Still, these emotions continue to help us handle everyday tasks. It is the presence of complex emotions and feelings that distinguishes us from animals. Although, to be honest, feline contempt sometimes looks far more expressive than all our attempts to keep our composure in a dead-end situation.

Now for the official definition.

An emotion is a short-term reaction of the organism to an external or internal stimulus, to an object, or to another person.

Emotions can be triggered by works of art, music, photos, film, and theatre. In everyday life they are often divided into positive and negative. Based on this distinction, people frequently recommend «staying positive» and «not reacting to negativity.» Sometimes it sounds like: «In my universe, that doesn't exist.» It will... We are all interconnected — with one another and with this world. From the scientific standpoint of Emotional Intelligence, dividing emotions into positive and negative is fundamentally wrong. All emotions — both «negative» and «positive» — help us make decisions and take action. In other words, they provide information that we can use.

It is more accurate to divide emotions into pleasant and unpleasant. Pleasant emotions include, for example: delight, surprise, joy, trust, serenity. Unpleasant emotions include: anger, disgust, displeasure, sadness, sorrow, fear.

In addition, emotions can be divided into two more types: high-energy and low-energy:

— Pleasant, high-energy emotions include delight and surprise. They give us energy for work and creativity.

— Pleasant, low-energy emotions include acceptance and trust. These emotions help us understand ourselves and the world around us.

The same can be said about unpleasant emotions. The strongest unpleasant emotion, with the highest energy, is rage. This emotion is close to affect; it cannot be controlled. Actions under rage are destructive. The weakest unpleasant emotion — one that drains a person's energy — is grief.

You've probably noticed that there are many more unpleasant emotions than pleasant ones! As if the Universe decided we must take an intensive course in «mindful irritability.» This is especially true for those obsessively «living on the positive»: their fight with negativity resembles trying to scoop out the ocean with a teaspoon — while discovering, along the way, that the ocean is being replenished. But that's not our point.

In his theory of evolution, Darwin showed that pleasant emotions are like a generous sponsor: they help us explore the world, negotiate with others, and generally feel that life is not only work, deadlines, and queues at the post office. In a calm state we are ready to create and build. Unpleasant emotions, by contrast, are our inner security service. For example:

— Anger is a personal bodyguard that helps us defend boundaries.

— Disgust is a sanitary inspector protecting us from suspicious items in the fridge.

— Fear is that very friend who whispers: «Maybe you shouldn't go into that dark basement.»

— Sadness is a wise therapist helping us process loss.

That's why there are so many unpleasant emotions: they operate 24/7 so we don't forget that life sometimes resembles an obstacle course rather than a resort. Trying to live without them is like going on a hike without a first-aid kit: inspiring in theory, risky in practice.

A healthy psyche is one that can experience both the delight of morning coffee and the mild despair of seven unread messages from your boss after hours. Together, pleasant and unpleasant emotions create the inner balance that allows us to remain whole — like yin and yang, only with more user-friendly instructions. And yes, sometimes with permission to be a little angry at the world.

Why are emotions sometimes very intense, and sometimes barely present at all? To answer this, we need to introduce the concept of a person's values — what matters to us morally and aesthetically. If, during a conversation with you, another person suddenly experiences a strong emotion, know that you have touched one of their values. The intensity of the emotion indicates how significant that value is for them. If a stimulus does not touch any of our values, the emotion will be weak — or may not arise at all. For example, if you are indifferent to something, it means there is no value there for you. Values are one of the keys to understanding why emotions arise.

A Theory of Emotional Development

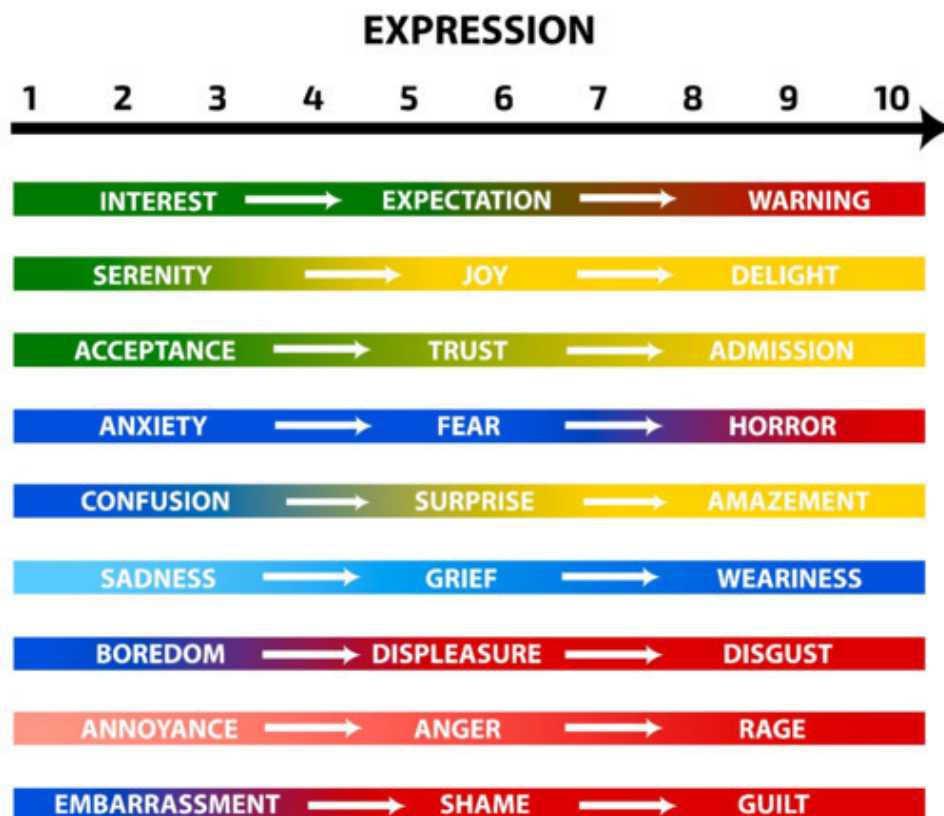
To identify your state precisely, you need to choose the right emotion. In 1980, Robert Plutchik (PhD, Columbia University) published an article and later, in 2002, a book presenting his psychoevolutionary theory of emotions. Today it is a foundational work describing virtually all of our emotional reactions. According to Plutchik, there are eight basic emotions characteristic of all mammals. (Of course, someone will always dispute this and is ready to question even the multiplication table. What can you do — we are all emotional beings!) If you observe your cat or dog, you will always notice one of them. Though sometimes it seems a pet experiences complex social emotions — for example, guilt for chewing your slipper. But perhaps that is simply fear of your indignant face.

«Basic emotions are hypothetical constructs or idealized states whose properties and characteristics can only be inferred from different kinds of evidence.» — Robert Plutchik (psychoevolutionary theory of emotions)

The basic emotions are joy, fear, surprise, trust, interest, anger, sadness, and disgust (see Appendix for more detail). In addition to the basic emotions, there are 19 primary emotions. Other complex emotions and feelings are built — like bricks — from combinations of these 27.

All emotions are grouped into triads — «families» with different degrees of intensity. For example, if you feel boredom (low intensity), over time it may grow into displeasure (medium intensity), and from there it's not far to disgust (maximum intensity). Imagine watching commercials for three hours straight — there's your triad in action.

All triads of emotional development were combined into the so-called emotional thermometer, which you can see in the Emotional Thermometer:



Triads are a kind of emotional elevator: how we move from mild sadness to total «everything is ruined.» The first emotions in the triads — interest, acceptance, anxiety, sadness — are manageable. For example, when you wake up and realize you've overslept a bit, you feel mild anxiety. But while it stays at the «I should hurry» level, you can still make it out the door without forgetting everything. It's a teasing emotion you can rein in. But if sadness grows into sorrow, and anxiety into fear, things change. Imagine your anxiety about oversleeping reaches 5 points: you're already annoyed with yourself, rushing, and of course you lose your keys somewhere in the depths of the apartment. If fear spikes to 10 points, you're no longer just «hurrying» — you're mentally rehearsing excuses. And then you remember that today is the most important meeting. Stupor. Terror. The strongest emotions in the triads — fury, awe, grief, disgust, rage — are beyond conscious control.

A feeling is the sum of several emotions. In Plutchik's model, simple feelings consist of two basic emotions:

- Love = Joy + Trust
- Submission = Trust + Fear
- Contempt = Anger + Disgust

More complex feelings are a mix of three or more emotions. For example, in Plutchik's framework love is simple, but in real life it may include all 27 emotions. Why not? Life happens.

An emotional state is no longer an emotion — it is a prolonged experience that arises after an emotional reaction. For example, after watching a profound film, an «aftertaste» may remain: not a short-lived emotion, but not yet a fully formed feeling. This state helps us process what we experienced and understand ourselves better.



Using Emotional States Effectively

Emotional states can be used virtuously — without trying to «fix» them immediately. Try proofreading contracts in a state of mild sadness. I guarantee you won't miss a single typo, even if it's hiding in a footnote in tiny print. Why? It's simple: emotions conduct our psyche like a maestro conducts an orchestra. They affect:

— Attention. In fear, it darts around like a kitten chasing a laser pointer. In sadness, it concentrates.

— Thinking. Fear forces thoughts to run in circles. Joy spreads its wings — and suddenly you solve a problem you considered impossible yesterday.

— Memory. Do you remember your first kiss in detail? And that classmate you merely sat next to? Exactly.

Emotions influence actions. They create engagement in a given activity — conscious or unconscious. Moreover, if we take a task and look at it from different emotional states (different moods), it appears to us more fully. And finally, there is such a thing as emotional empathy — when we understand another person's emotion.

For those who prefer precise coordinates in the world of emotions, there is the Mood Meter. Imagine a map with two axes: «pleasant—unpleasant» and «energy from minimum to maximum» (see Figure). This is your personal navigator. Using the Mood Meter, we can determine which quadrant we are in and decide how to handle specific issues.

— In the yellow quadrant (pleasant + high energy), you can generate ideas, write poetry, and plan your ascent of Everest.

— In the blue quadrant (unpleasant + low energy), it's the perfect time for documents. Even monotony won't irritate you.

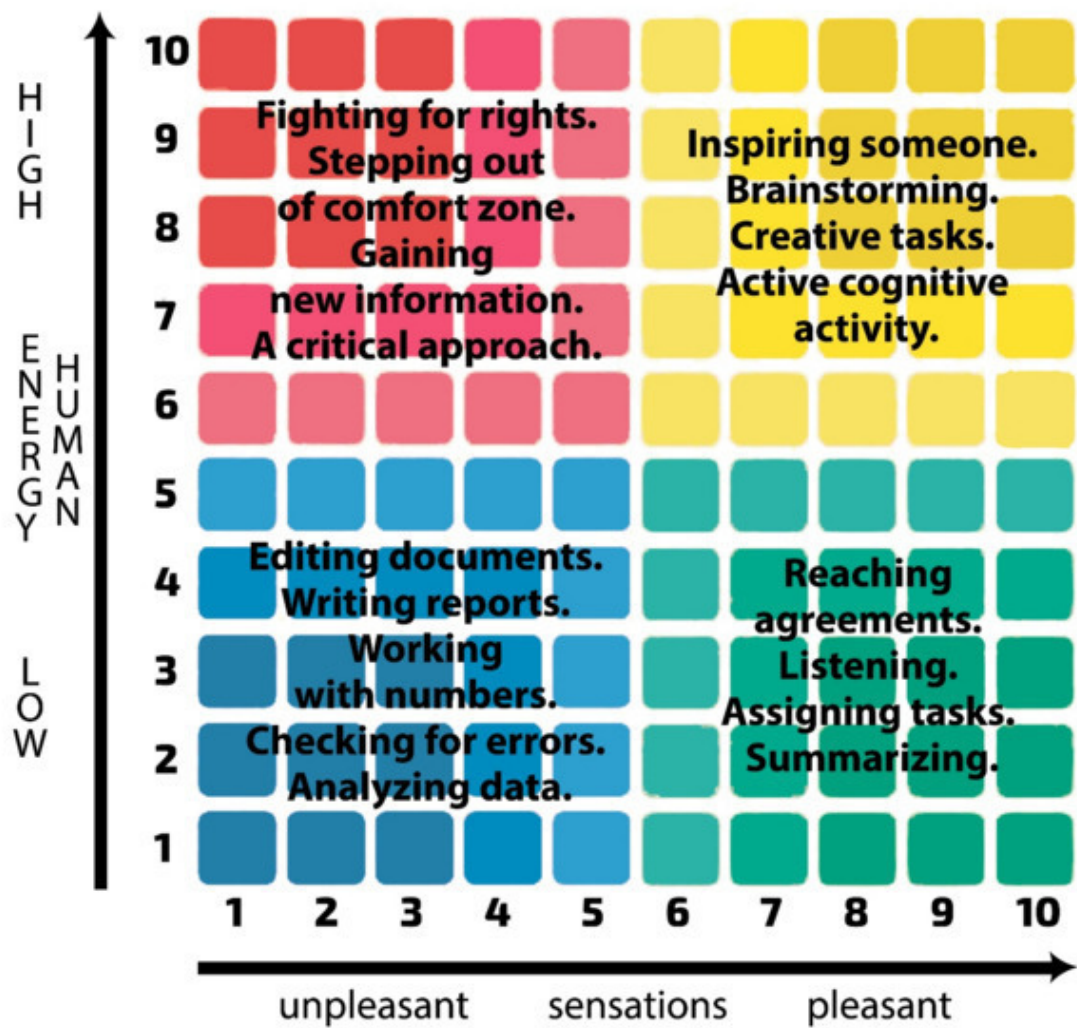
— The red quadrant (unpleasant + high energy) is the territory of healthy aggression. It's a good time for difficult negotiations, launching projects, setting boundaries, achieving goals, and defending your rights.

— And in the green quadrant (pleasant + low energy), it's good to contemplate eternal questions and have unhurried conversations.

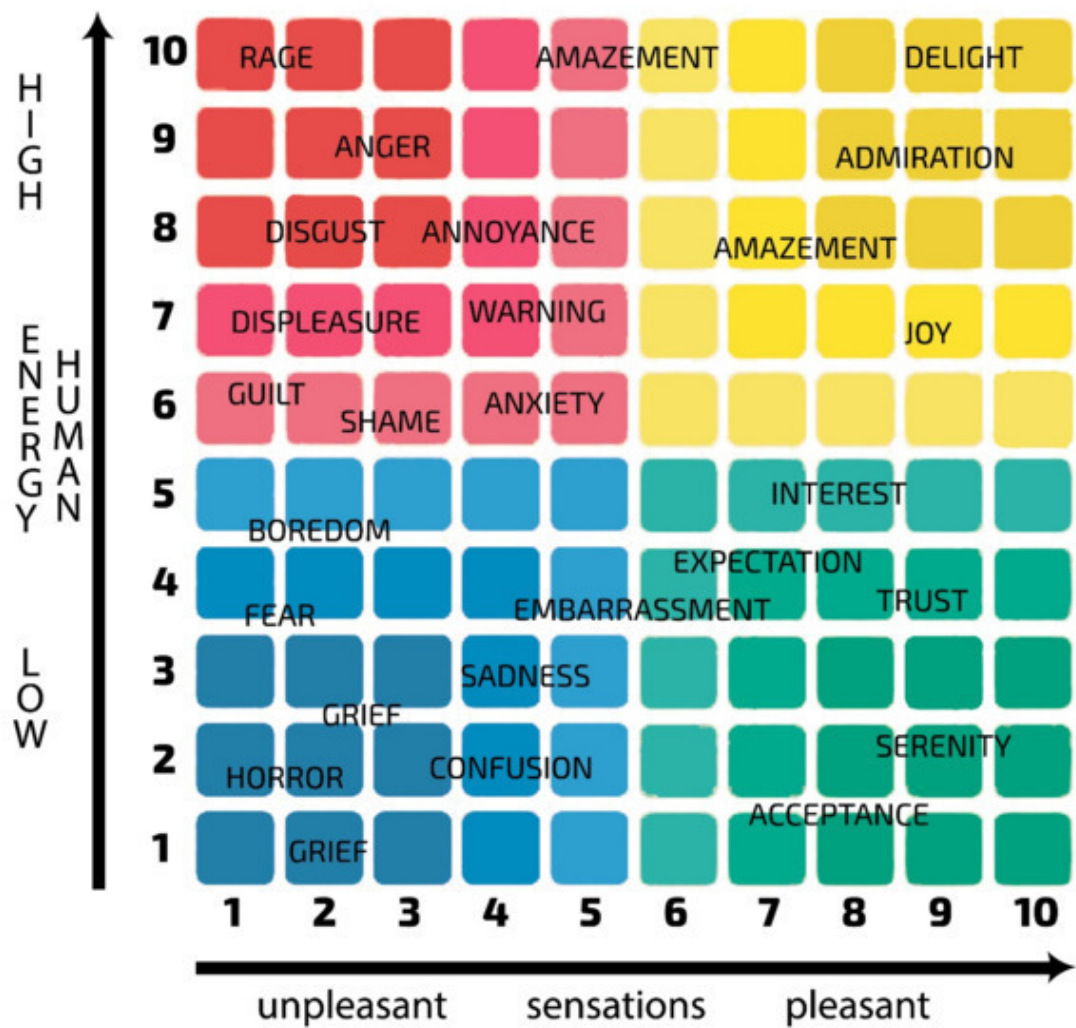
By understanding your emotion and the approximate quadrant it occupies, you can use it. I'll give another scheme with emotions laid out in it.

If we control our emotion and avoid unconscious actions, we can channel its energy into something constructive. When you notice an unpleasant emotion in yourself, don't rush to expel it. Ask: «How can I use this resentment/anger/sadness?» Maybe today is the day to say «no» to someone who has been taking advantage of you for too long. Or to write an angry (but well-argued) letter.

If, however, the unpleasant emotion weighs on you, it's time to learn to manage it with the help of the Game.



Mood meter



Mood meter with emotions

Conclusion on Emotions

After these examples, it's unlikely we can speak of the unambiguous benefit of pleasant emotions and the unconditional harm of unpleasant ones. As we have seen, our emotional kitchen is far more complex.

Doctors have repeatedly been struck by certain facts. During intense and prolonged periods of emotional tension caused by extreme situations, the number of not only psychosomatic but also common cold illnesses decreases significantly. However, this is characteristic only of those who, in these difficult and dangerous conditions, showed readiness to keep fighting for life and human dignity — that is, who kept searching and, possibly, experienced the emotion of interest and a feeling of curiosity. Search activity is the factor of health, and refusal of search activity is the cause of illness. Thus, the emotions that are useful are those that lead to search activity. It doesn't matter whether we stop searching for ways out of unpleasant situations or explore something out of curiosity. The important thing is to keep searching and to keep finding interests in life.

Refusing to move forward stops search activity and creates preconditions for reduced stress tolerance and the development of illness. Curiously, reduced stress tolerance and illness often occur in people who have achieved their goals: «I've accomplished everything. I don't need anything else; there's nothing to strive for.» This state is about *orkaz* from searching. If you feel satisfied and have ended your search, it may not be as good as it seems at first glance. This is yet another pair of dualities that cannot exist without each other; as you understand, the truth lies somewhere in between — in equilibrium.

Emotional Intelligence

As you've understood, the part of the book about emotions is just as important as the main part. Without correctly identifying your inner emotional state, it will be quite difficult to use the Game. Imagine trying to play chess while a small child is screaming next to you — this is what attempting to act rationally in the midst of an emotional hurricane looks like. Emotional Intelligence helps us calm this hurricane. Each of us has it almost from birth. Some people have a higher level; some lower. People with a high level of EI will find it easier to play than people with a low level. The good news is that EI can be trained. So what is it?

Sometimes I hear that there are countless concepts of Emotional Intelligence. The main laurel branch went to Daniel Goleman, who popularized his view of it. Goleman stated that «At best, intelligence quotient (IQ) influences 20%, and emotional intelligence (EI) determines 80% of success in life.» Much of the subsequent hype happened precisely because of this very promising claim. If there truly were a single psychological «secret ingredient» predicting success with such probability, it would be the greatest discovery since the invention of the wheel.

Now to the essentials. The term «emotional intelligence» was first introduced into psychology by John Mayer and Peter Salovey (Salovey, Mayer, 1990). They defined emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive and express emotions (recognize), to assimilate emotion and thought (use), to understand and explain emotions, and to regulate emotions (manage) (Mayer, Salovey, 1997).

Emotional Intelligence is a clearly defined and measurable ability to recognize emotions, understand their causes, manage them, and flexibly use emotions to improve the effectiveness of thinking and the solving of tasks at hand.

You can check your level of Emotional Intelligence quite accurately with a simple, almost primal question: «When I'm triggered, do I immediately act — or do I pause and think?» Those who don't pause have a lower level of EI. Their life motto is: «Press the red button first; figure out what it did later.» This can be represented by the following scheme, called the mechanism of emotional responding.



Diagram of the emotional response mechanism

So, under the influence of a stimulus — external (someone steps on your foot) or internal (you remember that someone stepped on your foot) — an emotion arises. We cannot influence its appearance; it flares up like a spark. And here, at this critical moment, our EI steps onto the stage (or gets delayed somewhere backstage). What do we do to make it work effectively? Everything ingenious is simple. After an emotion arises, take a pause and ask yourself three simple, almost philosophical questions:

- What am I feeling right now? (Rage? Resentment? A burning desire to prove I'm right?)
- What do I want to do? (Yell? Slam the door? Send a sarcastic message?)

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