

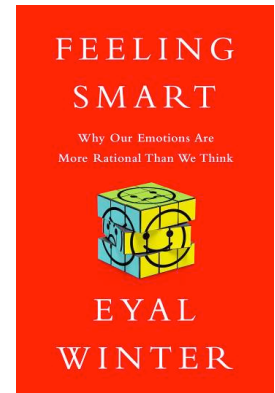
FEELING SMART

Why Our Emotions Are More Rational Than We Think

Eyal Winter

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“It is that rare book that a casual reader could open at a random page and expect to find something interesting...For the casual reader, *Feeling Smart* is a fascinating...romp through the positive ways that emotions can shape our actions. It is also a helpful balm for those who worry that their emotions occasionally over-run their ‘higher faculties’.” [Financial Times](#)

“We are used to thinking that emotions such as anger, love, insult, and so forth are irrational. In his new book, Eyal Winter explains why these emotions are actually very rational, fulfilling important functions that usually advance the most vital interests of each of us. This is an important, enjoyable, and convincing book.”

—Robert J. Aumann, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2005)

“Emotions and rationality are often thought of as polar opposites. But Eyal Winter—a leading game theorist and economist—shows compellingly that emotions can actually *promote* rational behavior. His book makes fascinating reading.”

—Eric Maskin, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2007)

“It is a pleasure to follow Eyal Winter as he explores the deep logic of illogical emotions and helps us to see the rationality of irrational behavior.”

—Roger Myerson, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2007)

“Much like Sigmund Freud, Eyal Winter knows that understanding human behavior demands listening and observing rather than labeling and categorizing. But here’s what Freud didn’t know: that framing his findings in the rigorous language of economic theory would be so illuminating, so surprising, and so exciting.”

—Robert Lucas, Nobel Laureate in Economics (1995)

“Eyal Winter’s book admirably draws together the important recent work on social and individual behavior and its implications for economic behavior. He shows clearly how the more traditional rational analysis remains an important part of explanation, but is by no means adequate. His exposition is breezily informal, yet rigorous; accounts from his family join seamlessly with citations on the literature, to which he himself has made significant contributions.”

—Kenneth Arrow, Nobel Laureate in Economics (1972)

“Eyal Winter has written engagingly on the science of action and emotion; on why and how feelings make us smarter and are central to understanding rational action and interaction in processes of human betterment that are subtly inaccessible to our self-aware consciousness.”

—Vernon Smith, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2002)

“Eyal Winter, a distinguished game theorist and behavioral economist, writes about rationality and emotion with compassion and empathy.”

—Alvin Roth, Nobel Laureate in Economics (2012)

“Eyal Winter’s breezy guide to when and why it is sometimes perfectly rational to let the heart rule the head is as fresh as it is clever. In his brisk tour of the burgeoning field of experimental economics, Professor Winter shows that sense and sensibility are complements rather than polar opposites, and proves his point with intriguing insights into hot-button issues like affirmative action and the Arab-Israeli conflict. *Feeling Smart* will leave you feeling not only smarter, but more optimistic as well.”

—Sylvia Nasar, author, *A Beautiful Mind*

“In *Feeling Smart* Eyal Winter shows us how the emotions that we sometimes wish we didn’t have, such as anger and envy, can be surprisingly useful. You will certainly not be less angry after reading this book, but you will better understand the focus that shapes your emotions.”

—Dan Ariely, bestselling author of *Predictably Irrational*

A professor of economics presents a spirited and entertaining defense of the hidden logic in our emotions, and shows how gut decisions frequently lead us to better and safer outcomes

By now everyone knows that humans are terrible decision-makers. Bestselling books have argued time and again that our intuitions fail us at key moments, leading to bad choices.

But in this surprising book, Eyal Winter shows that our instincts aren't so irrational after all. In fact, he shows there is often logic in emotion, and emotion in logic. For instance, the difference between pleasurable music and bad noise is mathematically precise. And people are inherently overconfident, yet often benefit from it. *Feeling Smart* reveals the hidden rationality in feelings like trust, anger, shame, ego, and generosity, and ultimately presents a surprising and very persuasive defense of how we think—even when we don't.

Drawing on original research, especially relying on laboratory experiments of game theory and decision-making, Winter explains:

- How unfair treatment does make us sick: it provokes activity in the brain in areas associated with disgust and the vomit reflex
- Why there is strength in numbers: how collective emotions and group cohesion enable individuals to improve their material conditions and bolster their chances of survival
- Gender differences, such as why men are more group-oriented and geared toward collective emotions (ie, sports fandom, nationalism) than women
- Why blushing makes your mistakes and faults more socially acceptable
- How we create emotional rules to guide our interactions with others, such as the desire for revenge or for punishment when someone has treated us unfairly, or maintaining a sense of honor in the face of perceived insult.
- Why ethnic diversity in a neighborhood leads to a drop in charitable giving
- Why bravado isn't always a bad thing: we overestimate our abilities by primarily remembering our "wins" rather than "fails," but why this overconfidence raises our "market value" in social situations
- How herd behavior can lead large numbers of individuals all to make the same irrational mistake

Contrary to the conventional wisdom of the moment, *Feeling Smart* explains that "emotions are not a vestigial leftover of the evolutionary process from a long ago primitive past but rather an effective and sophisticated tool for balancing and complementing our rational side. In the end, it is the feeling and thinking person who has the advantage, not the person who relies on thought alone."

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"Many suppose that the domains of emotion and rational thought are always separate. But as this intriguing book demonstrates they are wrong: emotional sensibility makes an important contribution to rational decision making. *Feeling Smart* shows us how."

—**Lawrence Summers, former President of Harvard University and
former Secretary of the Treasury of the United States**

"*Feeling Smart* puts the social back into social science. The truth is that there's a touchy feely aspect of game theory, and Winter shows how expressing and understanding your feelings (and those around you) will help you become a far better strategist. Be smarter or be smarting, your call."

—**Barry Nalebuff, Milton Steinbach Professor, Yale School of Management,
and coauthor of *The Art of Strategy***

"Insightful and intriguing." —*Success Magazine*

"Filled with fascinating studies and personal anecdotes...A lively, accessible work." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Gives plentiful insights into the many factors that govern our choices... We can at least begin, with its help, to reason with our emotions through their inherent foundation of rationality." —*Publishers Weekly*



Eyal Winter is professor of economics and director of the Center for the Study of Rationality at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, one of the world's leading institutions in the academic study of decision-making. He is also professor of economics at the University of Leicester. He was the 2011 recipient of Germany's Humboldt Prize. He has lectured at over 130 universities in 26 countries around the world, including Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, and the University of Cambridge.

SEVEN NOBEL LAUREATES AGREE—*FEELING SMART* IS FANTASTIC!

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Jaime Leifer
at 212-340-8183 or jaime.leifer@publicaffairsbooks.com.