I. Overview

As with most great ventures, Wired This Way was inspired by a big problem.

When I was working in startups and venture capital, I met thousands of entrepreneurs. They buzzed with an indescribable electricity, and I was magnetized by their energy, passion, emotions, intuition, and other striking qualities. It was as if their operating systems were designed to be conduits for creation. They seemed wired to create the next version of reality.

But as I spent more time with entrepreneurs, I began to see a glitch in the power grid...

Much to my surprise, these powerhouses were very prone to short-circuiting. I couldn’t throw an iPhone without hitting an entrepreneur dealing with mental health problems, burnout, stress-related issues, and psychosomatic symptoms. One by one, I watched as my friends, boyfriends, and colleagues fizzled out.

Until eventually, I did too.

A few years into my job in venture capital, I was sideswiped by a crushing bout of burnout, emotional upset, and other system errors triggered by my intense entrepreneurial personality and lifestyle. Determined to find the reset button, I called upon my background in psychology, neuroscience, and mindfulness to discover why entrepreneurs were losing their spark, and how they could regain their potency.

It wasn’t long before I discovered the dirty little secret of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurs are plagued by a wellness crisis of epidemic proportions. A shocking 72% of entrepreneurs self-report mental health concerns, and burnout, emotional issues, and psychosomatic symptoms are on the rise. But despite the massive personal and professional costs, these issues are
often buried in the backlog of entrepreneurial priorities. Between the pressures of entrepreneurial culture and startling lack of dialogue and support, there’s nothing stopping the disruptors from being disrupted.

So what’s causing this system malfunction?

As it turns out, entrepreneurs have very specialized wiring. They’re powered by unique operating systems that make them exceptionally great at creating something from nothing. Evolution has designed entrepreneurs with a set of features that propel their work as visionaries, leaders, and innovators. They’re nothing short of human transformers with wiring optimized to transform potentiality in to actuality.

But this rarified wiring must be understood and maintained to function optimally.

When entrepreneurs mishandle their custom-built features, the same qualities that fuel their success make them more susceptible to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual distress. Combined with the inherent stresses of entrepreneurship, their potent features like passion, conscientiousness, and emotionality make them particularly prone to overheating. If they push their sensitive systems too far, they deplete themselves of their most precious resource -- their energy.

And the wellbeing of entrepreneurs isn’t just a problem for entrepreneurs... it’s a problem for humanity.

With the exponential growth of freelancing, startups, and small businesses, the wellbeing of entrepreneurial communities should be of utmost social importance. Entrepreneurs create the next version of reality for all of us. If the “source code” is broken, there’s no hope for the end product. To create a happy and healthy future, we must ensure the designers of that future are happy and healthy too.

So here’s the good news: Entrepreneurs are not wired incorrectly.

Most of them simply haven’t learned how to embrace their unique wiring. With candor and humor, Wired This Way teaches entrepreneurs that they gain an invaluable competitive advantage when they learn to manage their full suite of features — including their sensitivities and weaknesses. These “glitches” are often their greatest sources of strength.

Backed by science, interviews, and intimate personal experience, Wired This Way explores seven features of entrepreneurial wiring, and examines their charging and depleting qualities. Using energy as a framework to measure and build resilience, readers learn mindfulness-based energy management strategies to achieve optimal well-being as an entrepreneur.

It’s time for entrepreneurs to realize there’s nothing wrong with them -- they’re just wired this way.
Seven Features of Entrepreneurial Wiring

1. Conscientiousness

*Entrepreneurs are Highly Conscientious*

+ Achievement Orientation
+ Critical Thinking
+ Proactive Control

- Perfectionism
- Hypercritical
- Adverse Control Issues

- Understand the beneficial role of conscientiousness for entrepreneurs
- Explore the negative personal & professional consequences of excessive conscientiousness
- Learn mindfulness practices to find a productive balance between control & “letting go”

2. Passion

*Entrepreneurs are Intensely Passionate*

+ Self-Actualization
+ Intensity
+ Dedication

- Martyrdom
- Self-Neglect & Obsession
- Crisis of Meaning & Identity

- Understand the importance of passion for entrepreneurs
- Examine the challenges of tying meaning & identity to your work as an entrepreneur
- Learn mindfulness techniques to be passionate while maintaining healthy boundaries

3. Creativity

*Entrepreneurs are Extremely Creative*
+ Big-Picture Oriented  - Ungrounded
+ Visionary  - “Visionary’s Burden”
+ Rapid Ideation  - Scattered

- Ungrounded
- “Visionary’s Burden”
- Scattered

- “Visionary’s Burden”
- Scattered

• Understand the creative & visionary nature of entrepreneurs
• Explore how creativity can create a detrimental disconnect between vision & reality
• Learn mindfulness techniques to ground creative energy in reality

4. Emotionality

_Entrepreneurs are Emotional_

+ Strong Renewing Emotions  - Intense & Rapidly Changing Emotions
+ Inspiration  - Disagreeable Temperament
+ Passion  - Emotional Suppression

- Intense & Rapidly Changing Emotions
- Disagreeable Temperament
- Emotional Suppression

- Intense & Rapidly Changing Emotions
- Disagreeable Temperament
- Emotional Suppression

• Understand the science of emotional energy & how entrepreneurs use emotions to create
• Explore the impact of depleting & renewing emotions on entrepreneurial wellbeing
• Learn mindfulness practices & meditations to restore emotional balance as an entrepreneur

5. Confidence

_Entrepreneurs are Highly Self-Confident_

+ Self-Esteem  - Narcissism
+ Conviction & Optimism  - Disagreeability & Delusional Optimism
+ Risk Tolerance  - Excessive Risk Taking & Impulsivity

- Narcissism
- Disagreeability & Delusional Optimism
- Excessive Risk Taking & Impulsivity

- Narcissism
- Disagreeability & Delusional Optimism
- Excessive Risk Taking & Impulsivity

• Understand the upsides of entrepreneurial confidence & its biological underpinnings
• Explore why excessive confidence harms personal & professional wellbeing
• Learn mindfulness techniques for accurate self-reflection & healthy self-confidence
6. Curiosity

*Entrepreneurs are Very Curious*

+ Novelty & Sensation Seeking  - Commitment Issues & Addiction
+ Adaptive  - Unpredictable
+ Open-Minded  - Unclear Values & Identity

- Commitment Issues & Addiction
- Unpredictable
- Unclear Values & Identity

- Understand the biological underpinnings of curiosity in entrepreneurs
- Examine the drawbacks of excessive open-mindedness & novelty as an entrepreneur
- Learn mindfulness tools to keep an open-mind while maintaining commitment & stability

7. Sensitivity

*Entrepreneurs are Often Empaths & Highly Sensitive People*

+ Intuition  - Easily Overstimulated
+ Emotional Intelligence  - Absorb Others Emotions
+ Healer & Helper  - Overgiving & Overdoing

- Easily Overstimulated
- Absorb Others Emotions
- Overgiving & Overdoing

- Understand the common & largely misunderstood “empath entrepreneur”
- Explore the tremendous entrepreneurial upsides (and downsides) to empathic sensitivity
- Learn how to embrace sensitivities as strengths & practice self-care as an entrepreneur

II. Target Audience

*Wired This Way* will target the rapidly growing entrepreneurial economy.

Far from a distinction reserved for founders of technology companies, the label “entrepreneur” represents a massive segment of the workforce. *Wired This Way* defines entrepreneurs as individuals who are: 1. Entrepreneurially-minded, and 2. Tasked with creating something new inside of a startup, corporation, or other innovative environment. This expands the audience to any individual with an entrepreneurial personality, including freelancers, corporate innovators, startup employees, and more.

Every day, more and more people fall into the category of entrepreneur:
In 2016, there were 27 million entrepreneurs in the US
By 2020, nearly half of the US workforce will be freelancers
57% of Americans see good opportunities to start a business
There are countless entrepreneurially-minded individuals working in corporate settings

Given the burgeoning population of entrepreneurs, I believe the next few years will witness a fervent cry to address mental health and wellbeing within entrepreneurial communities. The target audience for Wired This Way is the massive segment of entrepreneurs who suffer from mental health issues, burnout, stress, and more:

- **Mental Health in Entrepreneurs**
  - 72% report mental health concerns (7x higher than controls)
  - 30% report depression (15% in controls)
  - 29% report ADHD (5% in controls)
  - 12% report addiction (4% in controls)
  - 11% report bipolar (1% in controls)
  - Dr. John Gartner said 100% of entrepreneurs he interviewed had hypomania

- **Burnout & Stress in Entrepreneurs**
  - 54% missed deadlines a few times per month or more
  - 88% said stress & fatigue stopped them from thinking clearly or completing work as quickly as they would like
  - 63% said stress & fatigue stopped them from starting as many projects as they would like
  - 96% said that stress & fatigue impaired their thinking speed, reduced their capacity to take on new projects, or both

While Wired This Way resonates with both men and women, I’ve found men to be particularly struck by its message. They are frustrated by the lack of thought-leadership around this topic, and relieved to speak with someone who not only validates their experience as normal, but essential.

- **Gender**: Females and males, skewing towards males
- **Age Range**: 20-40 year old, with average reader age around age 30
- **Location**: Any location, with average reader being an urban dweller
- **Professional Background**: Entrepreneurs, freelancers, and innovators who work within startups, corporations, associations, think tanks, or solo businesses

### III. About the Author
My entire life has prepared me to write *Wired This Way*.

I care *deeply* about the entrepreneur experience, and aim to be light-hearted and nurturing, yet scientifically credible advocate for their wellbeing. Fueled by a desire to heal myself and my colleagues, I write from a place of intimate personal experience and whole-hearted empathy. If I teach entrepreneurs nothing else, I hope to show them why their sensitivities are their greatest strengths.

After graduating summa cum laude with a concentration in neuroscience, I started my journey as a Neuroscience & Psychology Research Fellow at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). While researching creativity, flow states, and decision making in one of the nation’s top laboratories, I was invited to write about the intersection of psychology and millennial-focused topics for publications like *The Huffington Post*.

I was later drawn to the world of entrepreneurs. As a founding employee and network-builder at a startup and venture capital firm, I’m proud of the work I did to create acquisition-ready companies. These roles introduced me to thousands of entrepreneurs, and allowed me to embrace my inner entrepreneur. Importantly, I was able to witness and experience these issues firsthand, which inspired the heartfelt stories in this book.

I now blend my passion for psychology, innovation, and entrepreneurship as an Entrepreneur in Residence at the American Psychological Association (APA). A teacher at heart, I also instruct yoga and meditation, write for my blog ColorfulCortex, and practice many ancient wisdom traditions, including energy work, color therapy, and more.

The resonant, authentic, and often provocative nature of my work has been featured on various podcasts, magazines, and websites. I’ve been recognized as a DC innovator by *DCInno*, featured in publications like *Thrive Global*, spoken on leadership panels for brands like Whole Foods and Athleta, and represented companies like Brooks Brothers as a model for their Red Fleece New Professional line.
I’ve been fortunate enough to cultivate a large following that supports my work. My network-driven jobs have allowed me to develop an expansive digital and in-person network, spanning New York, San Francisco, Austin, and other entrepreneurial cities. I’ve also developed supportive relationships with influencers like Jeff Bezos and Arianna Huffington, as well as other large media companies, podcasts, event groups, and organizations.

With a background in venture capital, startups, neuroscience, psychology, yoga, meditation, and energetics, I’m uniquely qualified to become a thought-leader in this space. Using *Wired This Way* as a platform, I will write, speak, and teach about the wellbeing of entrepreneurs. It’s my intention to create communities, retreats, meditations, and additional books, as well as offer individual and corporate consulting on how to develop “entrepreneur-friendly” workplaces.

**Sample Media**

- ColorfulCortex (Personal blog)
- Thrive Global Feature (Personally invited by Arianna Huffington to share my work)
- WellnessForce Podcast (iTunes Top 100 Health & Wellness Podcast)
- Brooks Brothers Red Fleece New Professionals Interview & Photo Shoot
- LearnLoft Podcast
- DC Inno Feature
- Me To Tell Feature

**IV. Sample Chapter**

**Emo-trepreneur**  
*Emotionality in Entrepreneurs*

**Slightly Dramatic**

“You have some nerve. I’m very upset by this. Who do you think you are? How unprofessional...”

My young twenty-something heart dropped into my stomach: *That’s it. I’m a goner. This email will be the death of me.* I was a few months into my job working in venture capital. And no one was more surprised than me that they let me correspond with an elite mix of entrepreneurs.

And apparently, I had ticked this one off *big* time.

He was one of our most successful venture partners. A seasoned, serial entrepreneur, he was notorious for his enviable knack for creating and unenviable temper. It was only a matter of time before I tripped a wire. And my time had come.

Of all things, he found issue with my *tone.*
In my younger days, I had an affinity for smiley faces, exclamation points, and flowery language in emails that often smoothed over virtual kerfuffles. But not this time. He came to me with a problem, and apparently didn't appreciate my charming euphemisms.

Before long, word of the “blowup” escalated to my boss. Like a guilty puppy whose only crime was too much zeal, I went to his office with my tail between my legs. I expected a scolding at best, or a trip to the pound at worst. I had already beaten myself with the newspaper.

But much to my surprise, my boss laughed. His laugh both comforted and concerned me. It seemed to say, “Bless your heart. You just wait, this is just the beginning.”

And indeed, it was just the beginning. I would go on to piss off a lot of venture partners.

As a young, eager entrepreneur, I managed to create quite a legacy of turbulence. Over the coming years, I became intimately familiar with the emotional nature of entrepreneurs. It didn’t matter if they were a man or a woman, a first-time founder or a serial entrepreneur, they all seemed to share an unmistakable emotional intensity.

I saw more tears, breakdowns, and ecstatic displays of excitement among entrepreneurs than any other group of humans. It was as if their emotions lived directly under the surface of their being. Unlike professionals I encountered in academia or traditional business environments, it seemed entrepreneurs felt their worlds deeply.

And I found this emotional energy to be hopelessly contagious.

I would leave pitch meetings and tech events buzzing for hours with inspired excitement. In hindsight, this enthusiastic energy was undoubtedly what inspired me to leave the research lab and join their ranks. I was infected with the bug, and I loved it.

But their funks were just as palpable. When I was around stressed or frustrated entrepreneurs, their gloom exuded from them like a thick fog you could cut with a knife. They radiated negative emotions just as strongly as positive ones, like beacons sending out pissy vibes to everyone in their vicinity.

There was no doubt in my mind: Entrepreneurs have super powerful emotional energy.

And over time, it became clear their emotions made them successful entrepreneurs. The most prolific entrepreneurs used their emotions to create. The more they felt, expressed, and harnessed the power of their emotions, the more efficiently they seemed to make shit happen.

Now, if I could only get them to stop directing their emotions at me.

**Energy in Motion**

As it turns out, high emotionality is seen among the world’s best entrepreneurs.

A recent IBM Watson personality assessment showed that many top entrepreneurs, from Mark
Zuckerberg to Elon Musk to Satya Nadella, score extremely high on emotionality. While this might come as a surprise, these entrepreneurs can be seen on stages and in meetings using their emotions as a means to influence and create.

Emotionality is the observable component of emotion -- it measures how much you feel, react, and express yourself in the face of emotional stimuli. By looking at cues like facial expressions (smile, wide eyes), physiological responses (shaking, sweating), and observable behavior (fidgeting, gasping), researchers can measure how emotionally reactive we are to our environments.

And it seems this high emotionality is extremely advantageous for entrepreneurs.

The word emotion means *energy in motion*. When we feel an emotion, what we actually feel is the sensation of energy moving through the body. Emotions like excitement, fear, and love carry a charge that lights up our entire nervous system, and acts as an energetic catalyst to kickstart our thoughts, behaviors, and future emotions.

And the catalytic nature of emotional energy is critical to our work as entrepreneurs.

Our work is not just the product of sheer mental or physical effort -- it's a hugely emotional process. The emotional brain has more neural circuits, more connections, and is faster to respond to stimuli than our analytical brain. These energetic impulses move from our brain, through our bodies, and out into the world. In fact, researchers have found that the energetic signature of emotions can be detected not only in our hearts and brains, but in the field surrounding us.

According to David Hawkins MD, Ph.D., emotions have measurable energy that determines the health of our cells. His research has found that our log level (the measurable energy level in our magnetic field) increases as we experience more positive emotions. And as entrepreneurs, we can use this energy to our advantage....

The more emotional energy we harness, the more energy we can use to create.

When entrepreneurs feel strong emotions, they can literally *transform* that energetic potential into creation. The energy of our emotions is *fuel* that propels our fears and desires into tangible creations. That’s why it’s critical to let yourself feel strongly as an entrepreneur. It’s much easier to create something you have intense feelings about.

Emotions fill us with energy and passion to create something new. They provide us with a jumpstart to ignite our dreams into reality. When entrepreneurs choose work that’s emotionally energizing, they have an unbeatable competitive advantage. It’s like being plugged into an electrical socket.

Not only do emotions provide us with motivation, but they offer us limitless *inspiration*.
There’s perhaps no greater creative muse than emotions. Every great book, building, or company was inspired by some nagging feeling of love, sadness, excitement, or fear. The most successful entrepreneurs channel their intense emotional energy -- positive or negative -- into their creations. It’s remarkable what you can create when you harness the energetic power of visceral emotion.

And if we listen close enough, our emotions can be an entrepreneurial sixth-sense.

Emotions tell us a lot about how we intuitively feel about a person or situation. In fact, entrepreneurs who are in touch with their emotions can more accurately perceive risk and evaluate opportunities. For example, researchers have found that when entrepreneurs feel mixed and conflicting emotions, they can more accurately predict the risk of a given situation.

So if you find yourself with high emotionality, you’re in great company. This emotionality is an awesome gift, and necessary for your work. Because you’re wired with the ability to feel emotions strongly, you have access to a range of entrepreneurial advantages like:

- Sensitivity to environment
- Increased empathy and emotional intelligence
- Heightened creativity and intuition
- Ability to authentically influence
- Improved attention to detail and decision making
- High motivation and passion

But as with all our superpowers, we must use it wisely and beware of our kryptonite...

**Emotions of Entrepreneurship**

Because here’s the thing: Not all emotions are created equal.

Some emotions are undeniably “healthier” than others. According to HeartMath Institute, emotions like excitement, ease, and gratitude are energetically renewing (they increase our resilience), while others like anger, fear, and frustration are energetically depleting (they decrease our resilience),

Our energy -- and therefore our resilience -- is directly impacted by our emotional state.

And for better or worse, entrepreneurship is dripping wet with emotional experiences. The daily life of
an entrepreneur is a booby-trap of stressful and overwhelming situations. The Holmes-Rahe stress inventory lists the top 43 stressful events, and among these are stressors that entrepreneurs face on a near-daily basis:

- Major business readjustments
- Major change in financial state
- Changing to a different line of work
- Taking on or foreclosure on a mortgage or loan
- Major change in responsibilities at work
- Outstanding personal achievement
- Major changes in working habits/conditions or sleeping habits

Researchers claim entrepreneurial work is a particularly emotional because it’s highly uncertain, requires high risk and investment, and involves heightened feelings of passion. We operate in a state of chronic uncertainty, bearing responsibility not only for our own futures, but the futures of our employees, customers, and often, we may feel, humanity. The success or failure of our work is often impossible to disentangle from our own emotional experience.

So while entrepreneurs experience lots of renewing emotions, like excitement and pride, we also experience tons of depleting emotions as well...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Renewing Emotions for Entrepreneurs</th>
<th>Common Depleting Emotions for Entrepreneurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excitement, hope, joy, pride, love, curiosity, confidence, fulfillment, optimism, contentment, gratitude</td>
<td>Fear, loneliness, doubt, insecurity, frustration, rejection, worry, panic, antagonism, depression, anxiety, anger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depleting emotions cause a huge amount of unnecessary energy depletion. They literally make us physically and emotionally sick. These emotions can be triggered by both external events (I’m standing in front of a room of dagger-eyed investors) or internal dialogues (I have no clue what the fuck I’m doing).

And depleting emotions are sneaky.

While we often recognize acute stressors, like the anxiety we feel walking onto a stage, we don’t always appreciate the long-term, low-grade stressors that run in the background. Chronic depleting emotions like insecurity or doubt slowly but surely use up our energy, like an open app that drains your cell phone battery.

In the stupidly simple words of Elon Musk, “I’d like my fear emotion to be less because it’s very distracting and fries my nervous system.”

Over time, depleting emotions burn through our

Energy of Emotions

Emotions can be renewing or depleting. Take a moment to think about your top 3 renewing and depleting emotions.

Renewing Emotions
- 
- 

Depleting Emotions
- 
-
energy reserves on all levels -- emotional, mental, physical and spiritual. They activate our sympathetic (fight-or-flight) nervous system, increase inflammatory chemicals like cortisol, and increase our susceptibility to a variety of illnesses, from heart attack to stroke.

Take me, for example...

As I described earlier in the book, my prolonged exposure to depleting emotions wreaked havoc on my body and mind. Feelings of stress, doubt, isolation, confusion, and other not-so-flattering emotions led to a whole host of colorful symptoms like sleeplessness, muscle tension, hormonal imbalance, and stomach upset. I was a mess, inside and out.

And even though these sound like personal problems, they were mega issues for my professional life. The weight of my depleting emotions made me a fuzzy thinker, sloppy worker, and shaky decision-maker at best. I was wiped out, pissy, and mostly in a daze. Eventually, my coworkers started distancing themselves, which was perfectly fine because I wanted to be left the hell alone.

I wanted to stew in my distress all by myself, like the big, proud “girl boss” I thought myself to be.

It was not a great strategy. But I’m living proof that exposure to chronic depleting emotions can trigger an entrepreneur’s susceptibility to physical and emotional illness. When you add the emotional intensity of entrepreneurial work to the high emotionality of an entrepreneur, you can find yourself in a massively depleted state.

Based on my interviews, I found three major ways entrepreneurs burn through their emotional energy. Let’s review them now:

1. Intense & Rapidly Changing Emotions
2. Disagreeable Temperament
3. Emotional Suppression & Denial

**Moody AF: Intense & Rapidly Changing Emotions**

It was the strangest thing.

He was at once the happiest and saddest person I had ever known. Marc was a serial entrepreneur and a dazzlingly fluid feeler. The bandwidth of his emotional expression both maddened and captivated me. I sometimes felt like I was the witness of an inevitable car crash, watching slack-jawed as he swerved recklessly from left to right of his emotional experience.

He often gave the people around him emotional whiplash.
But most of us adored him anyway -- his tilt-a-whirl emotionality was admittedly endearing. He expressed his emotions like a child, with an authenticity and transparency you couldn’t help but admire. You always knew how he felt, exactly when and how he felt it.

And I have to admit... the buzz of his emotions was contagious.

When an opportunity excited him, he was like Tom Cruise announcing his engagement, metaphorically (and sometimes literally) jumping on the furniture. Through the power of his positive emotions, he could recruit, inspire, and sell his products to anyone. It was as if he gave people a contact high. When he felt good, he was the guy you wanted to sit next to. There was no doubt his emotionality was a huge contributor to his success.

But when things were in the dumps, they were really dumpy.

Like, couldn’t leave the house, living on pizza, holed up with his cat kind of dumpy. After days or weeks of riding high, he’d suddenly and unpredictably careen into an emotional ditch. When he was facing rejection or failure, or stewing in stories about his yet-untapped potential, he’d wade into the waters of fatigue and sadness, often accompanied by full-blown depression and way too many beers.

And I’ve seen it again and again...

Entrepreneurs experience the peaks and valleys of life with visceral intensity. And it’s no wonder we have ever-changing moods -- entrepreneurship arguably offers the highest highs and lowest lows of any career path. There’s a great cartoon that depicts the daily emotions of an entrepreneur: “Hell yeah! Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck. Hell yeah! Oh fuck...”

Researchers believe our passion is largely to blame for the rollercoaster of entrepreneurial emotions.

As passionate entrepreneurs, we have access to more renewing emotions than regular employees. Our wins are shot directly into our bloodstream. We often display manic levels of excitement and pride because the credit for our work is not diluted -- our successes happen because we made them happen. We’re rewarded for our passion and dedication with well-deserved feelings of elation.

But for passionate entrepreneurs, our losses are also entirely and gut-wrenchingly our own. As the “parents” of our creations, we often take on the emotions of our work as if it were a living, feeling thing. We feel the blows, losses, and insults with indiscriminate intensity. Unlike employees who can wave off a mistake or flopped interaction, entrepreneurs (by choice or necessity) internalize errors as reflections of themselves.
And it seems few entrepreneurs are immune to the seasickness of intense and ever-changing emotions.

In the words of Marc Andreessen, “You flip rapidly from day-to-day — one where you are euphorically convinced you are going to own the world, to a day in which doom seems only weeks away and you feel completely ruined, and back again. Over and over and over. And I’m talking about what happens to stable entrepreneurs.”

I’m the first to admit how rapidly entrepreneurial emotions can shift.

One moment, I’m bopping down the street bursting with bubble-gum flavored renewing emotions, high on my own lusty passion for work. And the next moment, I’m having an existential meltdown because I’m certain something will prevent my work from meeting its full potential. Sometimes even I have a hard time knowing how I’m feeling… it’s no wonder colleagues, family members, and boyfriends often find themselves befuddled. Bless their hearts.

Turns out, researchers have also found a biological reason for our exacerbated mood swings.

Entrepreneurs are genetically wired to experience emotional extremes. Not only are we high in emotionality, but we’re also significantly more likely to suffer from bipolar, hypomania, and depression than typical employees, all of which involve extreme emotional states. According to Tim Ferriss, “If you’re driven, an entrepreneur, a type-A personality, or a hundred other things, mood swings are part of your genetic hardwiring. It’s a blessing and a curse.”

And he’s right -- mood swings are a blessing and a curse.

Intense emotions offer us lots of nice bonuses like heightened inspiration, passion, productivity, and influence. We wouldn’t be the creators we are without the ability to feel acutely. But if we don’t keep our intense emotions in check, there are a lot of not so great side-effects. We can become addicted to emotional intensity, and desensitized to the spectrum of “normal” emotions.

For many entrepreneurs, anything in between elation or devastation seems stale and kinda boring.

From an energetic perspective, this jerky, unpredictable see-sawing of emotions isn’t sustainable or efficient (or, frankly, pleasant). If you think about an electric car, it requires less energy to ride at a
steady pace than it does to stop and restart very few feet. Not only does this waste energy, but it annoys the hell out of everyone nearby.

To preserve our energy (and not tick off our colleagues and partners), it’s important to stabilize our emotional response. Be on the lookout for emotional regulation tips at the end of the chapter.

**Feisty Founders: Disagreeable Temperament**

Entrepreneurs can be some of the most positive, labrador-retriever-like humans on the planet. But there are also some pretty insane stories about their disagreeable temperaments...

You don’t have too search too hard to find an entrepreneur making themselves look like… well… a jackass. If you’ve spent any time around entrepreneurs, you know they occasionally dabble in forehead vein bulging screaming matches and colorfully strung-together cursing rants. Although interestingly, this disagreeability is often quickly replaced by calmness and humor.

And perhaps no one is more famous -- or infamous -- for this than Steve Jobs.

When VLSI, Apple’s computer chip company, was struggling to deliver enough chips on time, Steve Jobs launched into a meeting shouting that they were "fucking dickless assholes." Sidenote: The company did end up sending the chips to Apple on time, and made jackets for their executives with “Team FDA” printed on the back.

A seemingly small issue, blown into epic (and kind of hilarious…) proportions.

Indeed, researchers have found that entrepreneurs score significantly lower on scales of agreeability than regular employees. And it seems that people who are disagreeable may actually self-select into entrepreneurship. After all, most people choose entrepreneurship because they don’t want to play by anyone else’s rules. Many of us are admittedly stubborn, impatient, and critical-minded.

And this disagreeability can be surprisingly advantageous for entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs who are direct (even disagreeably so) may find solutions faster than more passive individuals. Disagreeability also prevents entrepreneurs from wasting their time and resources on people or situations that don’t benefit their work.

But disagreeability isn’t always advantageous -- and can often be can be emotionally destructive.

Our disagreeable nature means we often seek out emotional turbulence. Because we’re wired to crave newness and stimulation, entrepreneurs tend to gravitate towards the intensity of drama, crisis, and
conflict. Many of us like the adrenaline jolt of a fiery conversation, or the blood-pumping excitement a tense situation. We find it thrilling to poke, prod, and disrupt.

(Anecdotally speaking, I can also add that many entrepreneurs like a healthy dose of disagreeability in their romantic relationships to keep things interesting…)

Growing up, my parents thought I’d make a brilliant lawyer because of my disagreeable nature. I was never mean, but I was always quick to offer a dissenting opinion. I’d pick little fights, and was always the last one to say sorry. As my mother once told me, “I say blue, you say red. I say up, you say down. I say hot, you say cold. Can you just agree for once?”

There are quite a few home videos in which I’m being called, “Oscar the Grouch.”

While these doses of mini-drama gave me the intensity fix I craved, they didn’t make me a particularly happy person. Even through young adulthood, I found myself in a state of productive melancholy, always sharing a contrary point of view or trying to prove why someone was wrong. And I’ll tell you what -- this disagreeability burns through a lot of energy.

It now makes a lot of sense why I felt so freaking tired all the time.

Intense depleting emotions like anger, frustration, and resentment are particularly draining, and can do short and long-term damage to our health and wellbeing. Not to beat the technology metaphor dead, but an entrepreneur who’s relentlessly and chronically disagreeable is like a processor that gets fried from running on overdrive all the time. At some point, you have to cool down.

To protect our energy, it’s critical to develop an awareness of our disagreeability, and turn down the intensity. At the end of this chapter, we’ll learn some mindfulness techniques to chill out our overheated processors, and use our disagreeability productively.

**Bottle It Up: Emotional Suppression & Denial**

The wires were scheduled to be sent later that day.

Joe was a first-time founder who found himself with the right idea at the right time. He had spent the past few months pitching top-tier investors for his charmingly niche and surprisingly catchy startup -- and his hard work was about to pay off. A San-Francisco based venture capital firm announced they would lead his round, and the partners were over the moon about their new find. All signs pointed to future unicorn status.

It was a founder’s dream.
But not for Joe. At least, not anymore. Over the past few months, he had secretly been struggling with overwhelming anxiety and depression. He had never started a company before, much less taken on millions of dollars of outside capital. His team was rapidly growing, the customers were coming in droves, and now, he had fiery tempered VCs demanding outsized returns. The walls were slowly closing in.

Joe was in over his head, and there was no escape hatch.

But no one around Joe suspected a thing. He hid it well. Like many entrepreneurs, Joe quickly learned that, to survive, he had to keep his fears, doubts, and worries locked in, bottled up, and shut down. With a stack of invitations to speak on panels and take glossy photos for best-of lists in entrepreneur magazines, there was simply no time to fall apart.

So he faked it.

Surrounded by leagues of seemingly resilient entrepreneurs, Joe felt he had no choice but to keep calm and push on. He mimicked their brash toughness and exuded an air of fine-ness at all times. And at the end of the year, he had become so successful at this masquerade that he beat the competition and won the hand of one of the best VCs in town.

But his inner-experience couldn't have been more different.

The reality was that Joe couldn't sleep or eat, and barely managed to drag himself out of bed. His depleting emotions became so intense that he couldn't perform basic work or daily activities. In a cruel and ironic plot twist, his newfound status in the spotlight left him with nowhere to turn. He had worked so hard to cultivate an image of resilience, but now there was no safe space to take off the mask.

It was only a matter of time before the facade came crumbling down.

On the day the wires were scheduled to be sent, the phone rang at the venture firm. It was Joe. Wanting to lay all the cards on the table, he told them about his emotional struggles. The partners were puzzled... they had never been in this predicament before. On one hand, they commended his bold transparency. But on the other, they were wary about investing in a “broken” founder.

At the end of the call, the wires were cancelled.

The deal fell apart. And to this day, I still wonder how things could have been different if he had shared his struggles before it was too late. I have to imagine that Joe and the venture firm could have optimized their time, resources, and wellbeing by taking a more authentic approach.

But unfortunately, this story is becoming all too common for entrepreneurs...

As our collective fascination with entrepreneurship has grown, there’s been an overwhelming amount of content glorifying founders. We see their smiling, well-rested faces on the cover of magazines with the words “crushing it” haloing their heads. We read the articles and marvel at their demanding daily list of to-dos that they appear to manage with ease and grace.
They seem impossibly resilient.

But these well-manicured auras of emotional resilience are all too convincing, and ignite the competitive, achievement-oriented fire in entrepreneurs. We begin to tell ourselves stories that entrepreneurs are always tough and strong. That “weak” emotions like worry and doubt aren’t sexy, appropriate, or tolerable. That if we’re not fearlessly disrupting at all times, someone will disrupt us.

The media makes it easy to believe that entrepreneurs are impenetrable. That stoic resilience in our God-given nature. We easily convince ourselves that we should be able to shoulder crushing debt, employee livelihoods, and enormous amounts of responsibility while having time to blow-out our hair, go to SoulCycle, and stay emotionally healthy. We’re led to believe: If I’m not loving my life and work all the time, I’m doing it wrong.

And the truth is, the current entrepreneurial culture isn’t designed to embrace “weak” emotions.

We reward entrepreneurs for their ability to work productively, rather than work sustainably. We give funding, top talent, and adoring praise to entrepreneurs who boast unshakeable confidence, rather than those who share their authentic selves. We consciously or unconsciously shame our employees and colleagues who indulge in too many of those unlimited vacation days for much-needed self-care.

So when we feel anything except photo-worthy resilience, entrepreneurs often choose to hide it.

Despite the emotional nature of entrepreneurs, there seems to be an emerging trend of “faux resilience.” More and more, entrepreneurs feel the pressure to mask their authentic emotions, pretending to be okay, when they’re not okay. Telling investors and other stakeholders that everything is fine, when it isn’t. Pretending to keep pace with the competition, when inside, they’re drowning.

And it’s surprisingly easy for entrepreneurs to fake it.

Entrepreneurs are superb impression managers. We’re wired to be salespeople, and learn early on how to present ourselves in front of different stakeholders to reap the maximum rewards. This isn’t to say entrepreneurs are intentionally deceitful. We’re more emotionally intelligent opportunists. We can flip different switches on and off to show people what they need to see in order to buy what we’re selling.

And these impression management skills can be hugely beneficial for entrepreneurs.

Impression management can be thought of as an entrepreneurial survival mechanism. If we do it well, we can appear to be a strong and sturdy leader, stable and certain investment, authentic and honest salesperson, and formidable and unapologetic competitor.

But when we bottle up our emotions for too long, we drain our energy big time.

### Hidden Emotions

- Do you ever “fake” your emotions to appear more resilient?
- Do you ever feel like everyone around you is more resilient than you?
- Do you believe people would respect you less if you were emotionally vulnerable?
As I mentioned earlier in the book, I spent years carefully maintaining my image to seem *unfathomably* resilient. I smoothed over all the bumps and bruises to make it look like I was winning all the time. And even when my hair started to fall out from the stress of countless suppressed emotions, I quietly and discreetly brushed it off the side of my desk, into the trash. And I always managed to smile for photos.

You can probably imagine how exhausting all of this emotional suppression was...

It hurts my heart to see entrepreneurs playing this lose-lose game. To truly embrace emotional vulnerability and authenticity, it requires change at both the individual and cultural level. We’ll discuss some tips at the end of the chapter to end this epidemic of silent suffering, and bring much needed light to the emotional self-care needs of entrepreneurs.

**Re-Wiring for Emotional Resilience**

So how do we rewire ourselves for optimal emotional resilience?

It’s important for us to use our emotionality for all its awesome energizing qualities, while keeping ourselves protected from excessive energy drains. Let’s review the 4-step MESS (haha) plan to learn from our depleting emotions, develop embodied awareness, replace depleting emotions with renewing emotions, and create safe spaces for emotional expression.

    Message → Embody → Swap → Safety

**Step 1: Message -- Learn from Your Depleting Emotions**

All emotions are designed to tell us something.

Even the inconvenient and ugly ones. As an entrepreneur, it’s especially important to listen to the subtle messages of our emotions, as they can actually have a diagnostic function. Feelings like fear or doubt can alert us to potentially harmful people, decisions, or situations. Don’t ignore the free guidance!

When you feel a depleting emotion bubble to the surface, ask yourself the following questions:

- What message is this emotion trying to send?
- How can this depleting emotion be an opportunity for growth?
- Is there a spark of creativity or inspiration in this depleting emotion?
- Do I feel a depleting emotion because I’m being disagreeable? If so, am I disagreeing for a good reason, or out of habit?

**Step 2: Embody -- Develop Embodied Awareness**

Our emotional state is an *embodied* experience.

We often *feel* a good or bad emotion in our body before we can consciously label it. When we’re in a positive emotional state, our body feels expansive, energized, and at ease. But when we’re in a negative
emotional state, we experience sensations of contraction -- we often feel tight, strained, tense, blocked, and sick.

Have you ever experienced trembling hands or fidgety feet before a big presentation? Do you get headaches or stomach tightness when you’re stressed? Or perhaps you you’re like me and clench your jaw and shoulders when you’re in control freak mode?

That’s emotional energy trying to be released from your body.

So when we block or ignore our emotions, they get stuck in our body. Over time, this can cause a host of emotional and physical issues. Because emotions are energy in motion, we must let that energy move through and out of our bodies to release them. It’s important to realize you can’t beat your emotions into submission with your thoughts… the only way out is through the body.

By developing embodied emotional awareness, you can “melt away” depleting emotions at the source. Cultivating body-intelligence is a process, so be patient with yourself. I definitely recommend starting some form of exercise or mind-body practice to get used to being in your body.

Use these simple steps to start developing embodied emotional awareness:

- Start with this easy question -- How does my body feel? Expansive or contractive?
- If your body feels expansive, congratulations! You’re most likely in an awesome emotional state. If your body feels contractive, find the feeling in your body. Do you feel a tightness in your shoulders? A heaviness on your chest? A pit in your stomach?
- Without judging the feeling, gently consider what person, situation, or thought made you feel this way. Using your breath and attention, move the energy through and out of your body. Use the meditation below to guide you...

Melt Away Meltdowns -- Meditation for Entrepreneurs

This meditation can be done anywhere -- at your desk, on the Chipotle lunch line, a quiet corner of your coworking space, or at home on a couch, chair, or bed. It’s all good.

Start by deepening your breath. Breathe in for five counts and breathe out for five counts. Keep breathing at this pace (or whatever pace is natural for you). If you’re in a private place, close your eyes. If not, eyes open is cool too. Gently draw your attention to the body. Start by noticing sensations on the surface of the body -- the clothes on your skin, the hair on your head, the A/C on your face. Spend a few moments curiously observing these sensations on the periphery of your body.

Next, bring your attention to sensations inside your body. Scan the body -- starting from the feet and ending at the top of the head. Notice where your attention is pulled to. Stop at any places that feels tight, stuck, or uncomfortable. Linger in these places and note what you feel. What deeper emotions or sensations arise? Hover over these sensations with curiosity.

Once you’re ready, direct the breath to that location. Imagine the breath as a powerful force that can unclog any blockages in the body. Visualize the breath melting this bundle of contracted energy, and
Step 3: Swap -- Replace Your Depleting Emotions with Renewing Emotions

Did you know your body doesn’t know the difference between a feeling that comes from an external situation versus one that’s self-generated?

To your body, a feeling is a feeling. Researchers at HeartMath Institute have found that you can create a state of energetic coherence in the body by generating the feeling of a renewing emotion in the body. In other words, you can actually increase your mood, energy, and health by simply swapping a depleting emotion with a renewing one. You can actually “plant” good feelings in your body and mind.

So if you’re in a meeting and start to feel the familiar funk of impatience, stress, frustration, or fear, practice a coherence technique (like the HeartMath Quick Coherence Technique® included below) to get back on track without ever leaving the table. These techniques are fast, easy, and validated by science to bring us into an optimal state of health and wellbeing.

HeartMath Quick Coherence Technique®

Step 1: Focus your attention on the area of the heart. Imagine your breath is flowing in and out of your heart or chest area, breathing a little slower and deeper than usual. Suggestion: Inhale 5 seconds, exhale 5 seconds.

Step 2: Make a sincere attempt to experience a regenerative feeling such as appreciation or care for someone or something in your life (a family member or pet, or feeling of calm or ease).

Step 4: Safety -- Create Safe Spaces for Emotional Expression

Unfortunately, all of these techniques only get us so far unless we feel safe.

As we now know, when entrepreneurs have no outlet to express their emotions, they often default to harmful strategies like suppression, repression, and denial. All of which are a buzzkill for health, happiness, and productivity. The feeling that it’s not safe to struggle makes us more likely to operate in a state of fight-or-flight, and experience issues like burnout and emotional distress.

As entrepreneurs, it’s our moral and ethical responsibility to make sure we’re creating safe spaces for emotional expression -- for ourselves and our employees.

- Examine Your Beliefs About Emotional Expression
  - Consider your conscious and unconscious beliefs about emotions:
    - Do you feel comfortable sharing your feelings?
    - Do you believe vulnerability is a weakness?
Do you think certain emotions are more “okay” than others? For example, is it easier for you to express anger than fear?

- **Examine Your Company’s Culture**
  - If you’re the founder of a company, take a look at the culture you’ve created:
    - Do your employees feel safe talking about topics like stress, sadness, or fear?
    - Do you reward or punish employees for emotional vulnerability?
    - Do you create opportunities for self-care and wellness?

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**Creating Emotionally Safe Workplaces**

Based on your responses to these questions, start considering how you might create a more emotionally safe workplace. A few options might include:

- Enhanced emotional vulnerability from leadership
- Rewarding employees for authentic emotional expression
- “Healthy venting” sessions for teams
- Mental health days and/or work from home days
- Improved mental health care coverage
- In office meditation, yoga, or exercise

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**Optimize Your Emotional Wiring**

So if you’ve ever felt emotionally drained as an entrepreneur, let’s all take a collective sigh of relief.

There’s nothing wrong with you -- you’re *wired* to feel emotions strongly and that’s an awesome thing. That said, it’s absolutely critical to learn emotional self-care techniques. Your success as an entrepreneur depends on it. To wrap up, let’s take a moment to review what we know about the good and bad of entrepreneurial emotionality:

- Entrepreneurs score high in emotionality
- Emotionality has many entrepreneurial advantages
- Entrepreneurs experience many depleting emotions because of the nature of their work
- An entrepreneur’s wiring may exacerbate the negative effects of depleting emotions

If this cycle runs us into a state of energetic depletion, we’re at a serious disadvantage as entrepreneurs: We have less energy to create. You can’t do your work if your energetic pilot light is out. In the words of Bruce Springsteen, “You can’t start a fire without a spark.” But when we manage to work *with* our emotions, not against them, we can truly optimize our unique wiring as entrepreneurs.