It’s natural to want to be happy all the time. But it’s telling that most of what many consider to be our seven basic emotions—joy, anger, sadness, fear, surprise, contempt and disgust—reflect the dark side of the human experience. These emotions are still with us because they’ve helped us survive through several million years of evolution, and they are an integral part of what makes us human.

It’s troubling, then, that so many of us try to avoid them. We use default behaviors that we hope can deflect or disguise them. We settle deeply into them, refusing to let them go. Or we attempt to ignore them entirely through cynicism, irony or gallows humor, refusing to admit anything in life is worth taking seriously. As Nietzsche once said, loosely translated, “A joke is an epitaph for an emotion.” Or as Taylor Swift, that more contemporary philosopher, said, “Shake it off.”

Whatever we may think we’re accomplishing, these strategies don’t serve our health or our happiness. When we don’t go directly to the source of what’s causing an emotion, we miss the ability to really deal with what’s causing our distress, and we lose our ability to be fully engaged with the world around us. Instead of trying to push negative emotions aside, we should accept them as a useful—though sometimes uncomfortable—part of our lives.

Adapted from the forthcoming book Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life

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**BIG IDEA**

‘Smart’ tattoos

Forget smartphones and watches. DuoSkin, a new product from Microsoft and the MIT Media Lab, can turn your epidermis into a touch pad. Or a remote. Made with naturally conductive gold leaf, DuoSkin places a technological interface directly on your body. One potential application would include a Bluetooth-like chip so wearers could sync their temporary tattoo to a music system, then swipe it to change volume. Another version changes colors. The process is designed so people can customize both form and function for a tattoo that lasts only a day. The goal, says lead researcher Cindy Hsin-Liu Kao, is to create technology that’s as personal as lotion or makeup, so “it really blends into the wearer’s identity.” —Julia Zorthian

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**DATA**

**THIS JUST IN**

A roundup of new and noteworthy insights from the week’s most talked-about studies:

1. **BREADWINNING IS GOOD FOR WOMEN AND BAD FOR MEN**
   A study from the University of Connecticut, which analyzed Bureau of Labor Statistics data, found that acting as the primary breadwinner in a family has a negative impact on the mental and physical health of men. For women, however, there was a positive psychological effect.

2. **LOW EXPECTATIONS MAY AFFECT BREAST-CANCER TREATMENT**
   A study in the journal *Annals of Oncology* found that women with low expectations during hormonal therapy for breast cancer experienced twice as many side effects from the treatment as those with less negative thoughts.

3. **DOGS MAY PREFER PRAISE OVER FOOD**
   In a study published in *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, researchers who analyzed canine behavior and neural responses found that most dogs liked getting praise from their owners just as much as they liked getting food, if not more so. —J.Z.