

## Surf the Seesaw: Unconventional Essays on Balance, Beauty, and Meaning in Life

**Scott A. Davis**

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*Personalized and informative, the self-help book Surf the Seesaw acknowledges that life can often be confusing; it suggests means of attaining personal balance in the face of perennial challenges.*

Drawing on personal experiences as examples, Scott A. Davis's triumphant self-help guide *Surf the Seesaw* suggests means of facing inescapable decisions with confidence.

This book compares human beings to computers whose "programs" are life's fundamental principles; it seeks to improve people's systems accordingly. Its five expansive sections concern themselves with human nature (and misconceptions of it); principles for interpersonal relationships; decision-making; parenthood; and philosophies of personal meaning. Each section is tidy and flows well, combining personal stories with the highlighted principles to engaging effect. Further, the sections end with questions and exercises (under the headings "contemplate" and "adapt") to help audiences apply the principles in their own lives. For example, parents are encouraged to think about why it can be hard to "see [your] children as peers"; to change this programming, they are asked to "Tell your kids often: I love you. I am proud of you. And I admire you," and to note what impacts these encouragements have.

The book's narrative sections help when it comes to maintaining interest in its advice. Indeed, Davis's life experiences play an integral role in supporting the book's arguments throughout, as when he asserts that it is valuable to ask for help from strangers, using the example of others seeking his assistance as proof. Stories from his marriage also play into his discussions about achieving personal balance, and his family gift-giving traditions (with stories about gifts that struck other family members as inconsiderate) are used to illustrate times when one's intentions grate against the impact of one's decisions. A list of qualities that he appreciates about his wife proves to be a moving example of mutual support in relationships too.

The book assumes an upbeat tone throughout, emphasizing values like gratitude, moderation, and appreciation for others. It muses that issuing apologies is often rational, too. But while its optimism recommends it, many of its ideas for personal improvement are familiar, as with its exhortations to examine one's habits and to adopt new habits when necessary, even if doing so leads to some initial upheaval. Negatives are not dwelt upon; the positives of change are centered.

Featuring inspiring personal stories, *Surf the Seesaw* is an informative self-help work filled with recommendations for attaining personal balance in the face of perennial challenges.

TRIPTI KANDARI (March 20, 2023)

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