

## Euler Book Prize

The Euler Book Prize is awarded annually to an author or authors of an outstanding book about mathematics. The Prize is intended to recognize authors of exceptionally well written books with a positive impact on the public's view of mathematics and to encourage the writing of such books. Eligible books include mathematical monographs at the undergraduate level, histories, biographies, works of fiction, poetry; collections of essays, and works on mathematics as it is related to other areas of arts and sciences. To be considered for the Euler Prize a book must be published during the five years preceding the award and must be in English. The Euler book prize is \$2,000.

The Euler Book Prize was established in 2005 and first given in 2007, the 300th anniversary of the birth of Leonhard Euler. This award also honors Virginia and Paul Halmos whose generosity made the award possible. The award is given every year at a national meeting of the Association.

### Susan D'Agostino

*How to Free Your Inner Mathematician: Notes on Mathematics and Life.* United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Everybody has a mathematical story. All too often the story is of personal failure or growing disinterest and frustration, the growing conviction that “I’m just not a math person” and “It’s all useless anyway.” Perhaps, though, a different narrative is possible, a narrative where an individual points to specific ways a variety of mathematics helped them grow as whole human being, in body, mind, and spirit.

*How to Free Your Inner Mathematician* by Susan D'Agostino shows us how that might be possible. With its short easily digestible, but mathematically profound chapters, *How to Free Your Inner Mathematician* leads the reader through brief introductions to an enormous variety of mathematical topics. Some of the topics are standard fare for popular mathematics books, but many others are new. For each topic, whether old or new, the mathematics and its history and cultural significance are presented succinctly and elegantly. Inspiring life lessons are drawn from either the history or the mathematics itself. Each chapter fosters curiosity, creativity, and wonder. Anyone can pick it up and understand some quite complicated mathematics, no matter how little time or patience they have. The book will open the eyes of students to both interesting mathematics and to how that mathematics might be used to shape their lives. For teachers, the book is a model for how we can make mathematics relevant in ways that include, but surpass, applications to the sciences.

The book is an invitation to learn more about mathematics, the mathematics community, and oneself.

## Response

As a Gen Xer growing up in metro New York City, I had an up-close view of the 1980s crack epidemic. Though I was too scared to experiment with recreational drugs, I also never aspired to be a goody-two-shoes. So, I found other ways to rebel. Given that I had dropped out of high school calculus with a failing grade, my goal to transform myself into a mathematician felt perfectly reckless. But once I embarked on my mathematical path, I discovered mind-bending objects such as the one-sided Mobius strip and wild arguments about the existence of different sizes of infinity. Who needed chemicals to alter one's consciousness when there was so much math? In writing *How to Free Your Inner Mathematician*, I sought to share some of the strangest and loveliest math that has inspired my mathematical journey—and to do so in plain English and with hand-drawn sketches rather than equations or jargon. My book is an invitation for anyone to join the community of mathematicians who celebrate abstract, critical thinking. Everyone is capable of thinking mathematically. Everyone has significant, untapped mathematical potential. Curiosity, desire, and persistence matter more in mathematical pursuits than innate talent. Whoever you are and whatever your mathematics background, my book offers an invitation to linger, listen to, and get distracted by your own mathematical thoughts. Thank you to the MAA for its appreciation of mathematical exposition. I am eternally grateful to my husband, Esteban Rubens, for his incredible love and support. I also thank my children, Marco and Sophia, for inspiring me with their curiosity and engagement in life. Thank you to my good friend and editor, Daniel Taber, and Oxford University Press for believing in my vision for this book. I also thank Bard College, Smith College, Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins University, and the Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education (EDGE) Program for significant and timely help freeing my inner mathematician.

## Biographical Sketch

**Susan D'Agostino** is a mathematician and writer whose work has been published in *The Atlantic*, *Washington Post*, *Scientific American*, *Wired*, *Quanta*, *BBC*, *Nature*, *Financial Times*, *National Public Radio*, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *Undark*, *Discover*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Times Higher Education*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and other outlets. She speaks widely about math, technology, higher education, science journalism, and fostering inclusivity, including at the National Museum of Mathematics (MoMath) in New York

City, the Heidelberg Laureate Forum in Germany, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and at colleges throughout the United States. She earned a PhD in mathematics at Dartmouth College, an MA in science writing at Johns Hopkins University, and BA in anthropology at Bard College.