

8 Ways to a Healthier, Happier Life – follow your *Intuition*

by Nicola Kimpton

How often have you had a gut feeling or sudden flash of insight that turned out to be right? Now, research published in the *British Journal of Psychology* has discovered what we've long suspected: these feelings (or intuition) are real and we should take our hunches seriously. Intuition is our 'inner guidance system.' It is something we are all born with, says life coach Rhonda Britten, founder of the Fearless Living Institute and best-selling author. Intuition is a powerful resource that can tell us the difference between what we "should do" and what we are "meant to do", she says. Following our intuition can help us to be healthier and happier in all areas of our lives. But if we're not used to using it, or even unsure how to recognise it, how can we go about harnessing and developing this valuable gift?

what is intuition and why should we use it?

Often described as a gut feeling, hunch or sudden insight, intuition is "the process of perceiving or knowing things to a high degree of certainty without conscious reasoning". For example, having a vision of an event before it happens; thinking about a person and then they show up, or feeling drawn to take a course of action that later proves beneficial. "Intuition can contribute to your health and wellbeing in many ways," says intuition specialist Sharon Franquemont, "from potentially dramatically saving your life to guiding you to a more balanced lifestyle." It can also assist with decision-making, improve your relationships and even help you to identify and follow your passions and goals.

how do we recognise intuition?

Intuition may present itself in a number of ways such as thoughts, feelings, visions, a sudden knowingness or a voice in your head. For example, you may 'hear' a voice in your head warning you of danger, or you may 'feel' drawn to a particular person who just happens to have useful information for you. Everyone is different and the way we experience intuition varies. What's important is to learn to distinguish intuition from the voice of fear. The key to this, Britten says, is to detach from the message of the insight and to focus on the "tone". Intuition will support you and tell you to go at your own pace, while fear will be demanding and tell you to get it now, she explains. Intuition is loving and brings with it a sense of calm, peace and empowerment, while fear is desperate, projects feelings of selfishness and control, and thrives on comparing and competing.

Pay attention

Our psyche is "always organising around incoming data," says Carol Adrienne, international workshop facilitator and author of *The Purpose of Your Life*. So we need to pay attention. Notice your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations as you go about your day. Perhaps something causes you to feel a prickling of your skin or goose bumps. Or maybe you hear a voice in your head or have an idea out of nowhere that instantly makes sense. These could all be signs from your intuition. Rather than dismissing them, make a note of them. Then try asking yourself what they might be telling you at a gut or soul level, noting your initial responses. Becoming aware of these subtle signs and the message they bring will help you to identify and understand your own intuitive style. And from a health perspective, according to Franquemont, being sensitive to your body's intuitive knowledge and clues can also make you more aware of changing conditions in your body and better able to monitor your health.



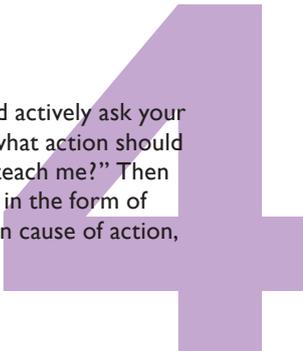
Relax and slow down

“Slowing down and doing less is great for increasing your intuition,” says Adrienne. Try setting aside one night a week or even a couple of hours to be still and do nothing. Switch off the TV and allow yourself to daydream and relax. Creating periods of stillness can help us to hear our intuition more clearly.



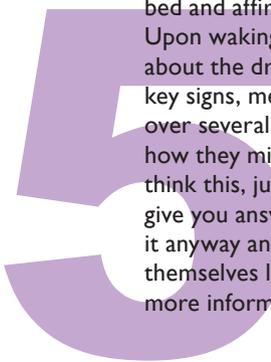
Meditate

Meditation is a great tool for accessing our intuition. If you are new to meditation, try short periods to begin with. Life coach Lynda Field suggests a five-minute meditation. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably with your eyes closed. At first, your mind may be full of thoughts, but just ignore them and let them go. Focus on your breathing. Try to note the stillness between breaths. If your mind wanders, keep returning to the stillness. When you're ready, come back gently into your body and open your eyes. The more you practice, the better you will become at quietening the mind and allowing the voice of your intuition to be heard.



Ask questions

Think of a situation you need help with and actively ask your intuition for guidance. For example, ask “what action should I take?” or “what is this situation here to teach me?” Then pay attention to answers which may come in the form of thoughts, feelings or urges to take a certain course of action, according to your own intuitive style.



Dreams

Dreams are a great way to access intuitive guidance. Before going to sleep, write a question you would like your dream to answer. You may like to use a special journal or notebook for this. Leave your notebook and a pen by the side of the bed and affirm your intention to remember your dream. Upon waking, lie still and try to recall as much as possible about the dream. Transfer this to your notebook, noting any key signs, messages or feelings, especially ones which recur over several nights. Ask yourself what these could mean and how they might be relevant to your life. Again, don't overthink this, just go with the flow and let your inner guidance give you answers. If you don't understand the dream, record it anyway and put it aside for later. The answers may reveal themselves later or you could consult a dream dictionary for more information.



Synchronicity

Synchronicity can be defined as *a meaningful coincidence*, or a chance occurrence that holds personal significance for us. The more we focus on finding meaning for ourselves in these “chance occurrences”, the “more we increase our intuitive power,” says Adrienne. So begin to notice seemingly random occurrences such as magazines falling open at relevant articles or helpful people you just ‘happen’ to bump into. Rather than dismissing them, take a moment to ask your intuition what message they might have for you. Being open to synchronistic events such as these is another powerful way of receiving intuitive information.

Play games

Games are a fun, non-threatening way to develop intuition. When the phone rings, try to guess who is calling, or try guessing what mail you have before checking the mailbox. Don't try to work things out, instead answer quickly and be guided by your intuition. The purpose of these games isn't necessarily to be 'right,' but to relax and enjoy exercising your intuitive muscles. In holding an open attitude, you might just be surprised at what insights come forward.

Take action

Perhaps your intuition encourages you to improve your diet, do more exercise or pursue a new hobby. After receiving guidance, encourage your intuition by acting upon it. If you are nervous to begin with, try using it in low risk situations or to make small decisions. It is also a good idea to ‘try out’ your options before you follow them by imagining the outcome of each and using your feelings to assess which one feels right for you. Remember to focus on using your intuition for yourself and for your own self-improvement, not for others and don't dispense completely with logic. Instead, as Franquemont says, see your intuition and logic as “partners” in your approach to life.

conclusion

Exploring your intuition may feel daunting at first, but it's well worth the effort. As intuitive expert Lynn Robinson says, as you tune in to your intuition, you'll “not only hear the directions you need for creating a life of peace and meaning”, you'll also receive “ample instructions for living the life of your dreams”.

Important Note: It is advisable to consult with your doctor or healthcare practitioner if you have any concerns about your health and before making changes to your diet or fitness regime etc.

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