

Intuition

Your Guiding Light For A
Better You And A Better Life



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Introduction

Have you ever experienced a sudden feeling that something wasn't quite, right? Have you felt a strong urge about someone you just met? In the moment, you may have felt difficulty pinpointing the exact reason for your sudden feelings—you only knew that, deep down, you knew something important was going on before the cause of your feelings revealed itself. This is called having intuition.

Having a strong intuition is a powerful tool in all areas of life. Your intuition serves as your inner voice. When you have a strong sense of understanding yourself, you find it easier to trust your intuition's "gut feelings" more frequently.

Often, listening to what your intuition is trying to tell you results in the best choices; many successful people depend on their intuition to serve as a guiding light as they navigate life's adventures and uncertainties.

However, being able to listen to your intuition isn't a skill possessed only by the ultra-successful—anyone can practice listening to their intuition and strengthening their trust in this inner voice. By learning to listen to your intuition, you can experience your own unique "guiding light" experience and use it as a tool to build a better you and a better life.

Digging Deeper: What exactly is an intuition?

Intuition goes by a variety of popular titles and names. For example, you may have heard an intuition referred to as:

- An inner voice
- A guiding force or light
- Your instincts
- A gut feeling
- A hunch
- Your deep-down feelings
-and likely many more!

Your intuition (or whatever you prefer to call it) is a primitive system of innate urges you feel when you're suddenly presented with a situation or information. According to Psychology Today, your intuition serves as a sort of bridge between your conscious and unconscious mind—you often feel your intuition kick in before you have a chance to know the whole story behind why you're suddenly feeling the way you feel.

Your conscious mind is logical and rational. It likes to have all the puzzle pieces laid out before it makes a final decision about your feelings toward any particular stimuli. Any time you've sat down to solve a problem or sift through a collection of information before making a decision, you've called upon your conscious mind to determine a good answer.

However, humans also have an unconscious mind—this is where thinking happens in your mind without rationality. Your intuition is a result of these two parts of the mind coming together.

For example, have you ever met someone and immediately distrusted them? Your conscious mind can't figure out exactly why you feel this way. You just met them, you've never heard anyone talk badly about them, and they haven't done anything wrong to you....so how can you already feel like they aren't trustworthy?

This is where your subconscious mind is trying to reach out to the conscious mind and "fill the gap" between the two. Deep down, your unconscious mind is detecting signals that something seems wrong about this new person.

As it feeds this information to your conscious mind, you feel your intuition rearing up the "red flags," or signals that something is wrong.

Is There Any Science That Proves Intuition Is A Real Thing?

For a long time, the science on whether or not human intuition was a real thing was a mystery. The idea that someone could make immediate, good judgements with little thought or seem to “know” something before having all the details has intrigued people, particularly scientists, for centuries. However, there was little quantifiable evidence of intuition to measure and study.

The Association for Psychological Science describes a recent study on intuition performed by a team of scientists from the University of New South Wales. In the study, the scientists exposed their test subjects to a series of emotional images subconsciously while the subjects attempted to make a series of decisions.

The study showed that the effects of the subconsciously shown images made a big impact on the subjects’ decision making patterns, thus proving that the subconscious mind is a part of the decision making process. Because intuition often comes quickly and without a lot of information to support it, this suggests that the “gut feelings” are coming from deep in the subconscious mind.

While our logical, conscious minds want facts and information to process, the subconscious mind is moving faster, leading to those mysterious yet strong intuitive feelings about something.

If this idea of conscious and subconscious thought occurring at the same time feels confusing, consider the following metaphor. Pretend you’re looking at an iceberg floating in the ocean. You can only see the actual tip of the big, floating iceberg poking out of the water.

However, if you dove under the icy water, you’d discover that the iceberg is actually extremely large—the base of the massive ice block stretches deep into the depths of the water, out of sight. You realize that you can really only see the tip of the massive iceberg since most of it is hidden under the water.

Conscious and subconscious thought are much like a giant iceberg. The tip of the iceberg, or the part we can see, is our conscious thought. We're aware of these thoughts in real time—these are the thoughts we hear, see, and analyze in our minds actively.

The subconscious thought is like the underwater portion of the iceberg—it is deep, largely unseen, and happens “beneath the surface” of our conscious thoughts. While our minds are made up of the whole iceberg’s visible and hidden parts, both come together to form the whole of our thoughts.

While our conscious minds actively process thoughts and information, our subconscious minds are also very active. Often, the subconscious mind picks up on very small, often undetectable bits of data and analyzes them quickly “under the surface” of our awareness.

While this may seem frightening (subliminal messaging and advertising works this way, for example), it can also be useful—it means your mind is constantly working quickly and diligently to analyze all data presented to you quickly so you can use it. This is where those intuitive thoughts originate.

When you get that strong “gut feeling” about something, it’s because your subconscious mind is working hard to keep you moving forward with decision making. It’s scary, but true—your subconscious mind often arrives at the correct or best decision long before your conscious mind can riddle through all the facts and information!

An Example Of Someone's Intuition In Action

To better illustrate someone's intuition at work, consider Jackie. Jackie is a runner who loves to get exercise every morning before she goes to work. One morning during a run, Jackie notices a car pull up beside her. A man she doesn't know is driving the car.

He explains to her that he needs directions to a nearby location. Jackie gives him the directions, but he claims to be confused and unfamiliar with the area. He asks if she can get into the car with him to better look at the map he's trying to follow on his smartphone.

Jackie begins to feel a gut feeling that this man is up to no good. She immediately feels uneasy and senses strong urges to get away from this man and the situation as quickly as possible.

Without even saying goodbye, she runs away from the man in the car. Jackie follows her intuition's messages to avoid this man and not get inside his car.

A week later, Jackie is watching the evening news and feels her jaw drop in shock. She sees the same man who tried to get her inside his car being arrested by the police! The news reporter explains that he tried to get a different woman to get inside his car and she called the police.

Apparently, the man was wanted for trying to lure women into his car so he could kidnap them. Jackie breathes a sigh of relief—her sense of intuition warned her properly....that man was indeed dangerous and running away was absolutely the right choice to make.

Does Your Intuition Only Give You Sensations Or Warnings For Bad Or Negative Things?

Absolutely not! Your intuition can be a powerful tool for avoiding some major red flags in life, but a strong intuition can also guide you toward good choices and success.

For example, consider Cassidy. Cassidy was having a difficult time deciding what she wanted to do after she finished her undergraduate college courses. She could either go straight into a career, take a year off to travel, or accept an internship that could later turn into a full-time job.

She felt conflicted—all her choices seemed like good options—but she felt clueless about how to decide which option would be most beneficial for her. Cassidy could see positives and negatives for each of her choices, but whenever she really examined all of them, she found herself drawn back to the internship.

Because of this gut feeling about the internship, she decided to take it. The internship ended up being an excellent choice that helped her develop her skills further and led into a permanent full-time position with the company. Cassidy's intuition led her down a great path!

Your intuition can be a powerful, insightful tool in a variety of life's situations. For example, your intuition could lead you to strong feelings about something as serious as which home you should buy to something as simple as what to make for dinner this evening.

Because your intuition is a tool of great variety, you can begin to explore it in some "low stakes" situations to gain a better understanding of what sensing your intuition feels like to you.

Consider the dinner example. If you find yourself caught between two options for what to make for dinner, and both sound good, try to focus on what your body is really feeling when you think about your options.

Allow yourself to "feel" which choice would be best. Follow through, listen to your intuition, and see what happens when you make the dinner! While this example seems trivial and silly, small

exercises like this strengthen your ability to listen to your intuition, meaning it could come in handy during bigger situations later.

Why Is It Sometimes So Hard To Listen To My Intuition

When your intuition speaks, are you ready to hear the message? Unsurprisingly, many people aren't! Trusting those random "gut feelings" can be tough because it feels like you're making a decision without all the information you need to do so.

Listening to messages from your intuition feels strange because there is no true logic behind them. As a species who likes to get the facts first, using your intuition as a guiding tool can feel impulsive, risky, and even dangerous.

However, in moments like these, it's important to remember how truly similar we are to the rest of the animal kingdom. Because we live in an advanced society doesn't mean we totally lose our animalistic tendencies—one of which is having a set of instincts, or an intuition.

For example, consider kangaroos. A newborn kangaroo understands that it can jump away quickly when it hears predators approaching. The sound of a rattlesnake's tail will send the kangaroo leaping away immediately.

The kangaroo didn't need to learn that rattlesnakes are dangerous or that hopping is a good escape method—they simply respond to the stimuli of the rattle sound and hop away on cue. Much like our animal friends, humans get these "gut feelings," too! We don't need to have an extensive amount of knowledge to understand everything; often, our intuitions send us strong signals so we can act accordingly.

Often, people second guess or even ignore their intuitions' messages. After all, it's tough to accept feelings coming from your intuition—how can you possibly be sure about making a choice based solely on a strong hunch or feeling?

As a logical, thinking species, accepting a nudge from your intuition can feel very challenging. In fact, many folks allow themselves to reason with their intuitions, finding logical reasons to ignore these strong gut feelings rather than heeding them.

Rather than leaning totally on logical thinking or totally on intuition, human beings are in the unique position to call upon both of these amazing tools when they're needed. However, learning to balance logical thinking and your intuition can be a challenge. When you're able to master this act, you can truly use your intuition to guide you toward a better life and self.

13 Ways To Strengthen Your Intuition

Many successful leaders credit their quick decision making skills on having a strong and reliable intuition. While it's great that these folks can make good and fast decisions, you may feel like your own intuition is lacking.

For example, you may find yourself flip-flopping between different options constantly. At first, you may feel a strong gut feeling leaning toward one decision, but twenty minutes later, you feel another strong gut feeling leaning toward the opposite choice.

This battle of the intuition can feel maddening! If you rarely (if ever) feel the nudge of your intuition trying to guide you or feel like your intuition is all over the place, there are some methods you can use to strengthen or better understand this skill.

1. **Understand that there are some mental issues that can hinder an otherwise strong intuition.**

The Free University of Berlin conducted a study on the strength of intuition among depressed and/or anxious people and neurotypical people. The researchers determined that folks with depression or anxiety issues had a difficult time trusting their intuition when faced with decision making situations.

In this situation, the sense of intuition isn't lost—it's merely clouded by other mental issues that are well known for blocking clear thought. If you've ever suffered from depression or anxiety, you know how difficult it can be to analyze and process your own thoughts; you may have felt if you had "brain fog." In this state, hearing your intuition's guidance can feel nearly impossible.

If this is the case for your own issues blocking your intuition, you must address issues with depression and anxiety first. Speak to your doctor or a mental health professional for the best advice in this situation.

2. Understand that the context of your life changes constantly, and this can be really confusing for your intuition.

Your life's context changes all the time. For example, think back to when you were in the third grade. Your thinking patterns and decision making processes were based on much simpler thoughts. You knew you liked recess and candy.

You also knew that you hated doing homework and getting grounded. These types of basic, yet solidified thoughts made decision making pretty easy, meaning your intuition was fairly strong and easier to listen to as a child. You got a gut feeling that you should say "no" when your sibling wanted you to do something wrong because your intuition was conjuring thoughts of getting grounded.

However, our thinking doesn't stay this simple as we age. Getting older means your life's context changes based on what's happening to you. When you're a college student, your context has changed. Once you graduate and start a career, your context changes again.

Every new romantic partner equals another life context change. The same goes for new children, divorces, moving homes, and more. When your life's context changes, it can make listening to your intuition a lot harder than it was compared to your younger years, when life's problems were a lot simpler and more "black and white."

3. Take note of your energy levels when you're trying to capture an intuitive feeling or make a big decision.

Intuition is often the result of a clear mind that's ready to accept incoming information. If you're struggling to get that pathway clear and opened again, begin taking notes on how you're feeling throughout the day, particularly when faced with decision making moments.

If you're lacking energy, you may also be lacking the power to let your intuition speak to you clearly. A few examples of why you may be lacking energy include:

- Poor nutritional habits

- A lack of quality sleep
- Tough hardships
- Stress from a relationship, work, etc.
- Poor hydration
- Not taking prescribed medications correctly

If you can isolate the specific issue zapping your energy stores, you can correct the problem to regain that lost energy and clear the pathways for your intuition to work properly.

4. Take the phrase “listen to your gut feelings” a little more literally.

Have you ever wondered where the term “gut feelings” originated? Many people believe it’s because these intuitive moments come from somewhere deep inside of us, but the phrase actually references the physical feelings and sensations many people feel in their abdomens when faced with different situations.

Your digestive system can help improve your intuition. The next time you’re faced with a big decision to make, let your literal gut feelings inform your intuition.

For example, pretend you are hiring a contractor to remodel parts of your home. It’s a big, expensive job, and you want to make sure you hire the best contractor possible to get the work done.

When you meet with the first contractor, pay attention to your thoughts about the person as well as your actual physical feelings in your abdomen. Does your abdomen feel tight, queasy, or nauseated? Does your abdomen feel relaxed and at ease? Listen to these “gut feelings,” as they are messages from your intuition!

5. Make an effort to interact more with all five of your senses.

That sense of “all knowing” that comes from your intuition originates deeply within yourself. The way you learn and understand more about the world around you is through your five senses. Everything you experience is either through touch, taste, sound, smell, or seeing.

Many people are moving through life at a frantic pace—so frantic, in fact, that they often don’t take time to get the total experience of what’s happening to them. For example, pretend you’re eating a gourmet meal in an expensive restaurant.

If you aren’t giving your meal your full attention, you could be missing:

- The physical atmosphere of the restaurant
- The textures of your different foods
- The scents from your meal
- The sounds you can hear in the restaurant
- The tastes and flavors of your meal

If you aren’t allowing yourself to be in the moment, you’re missing a lot of crucial sensory details that make up the whole picture of that particular experience. If you were wanting to get your money’s worth from this gourmet experience, you’d really be missing out!

Getting in tune with all of your senses is another good way to improve your intuition. Your senses serve as a way of gathering data about your environment and all your experiences. The more you’re in tune with all these different sensory experiences, the more knowledge you store in your memories about that particular experience. Over time, these experiences add up into a wealth of knowledge. This knowledge can serve as a support for your intuition. You may think “I’ve seen this before” or “where do I know that smell from”? These memories can jog your intuition when your mind quickly calls on them to make a fast decision or to deliver that “gut feeling” to you when you need it most.

6. Get comfortable with the idea of not having complete control.

Many aspects of life instantly improve when you begin to accept that you don't (and won't ever) have total control over your entire life. There may be some aspects of life that you can control, but even the most put-together, successful people will still experience life's unexpected curveballs. As intimidating as this is, it's a fact of life—nobody gets to have complete control over everything that happens to them.

When you release your mind from the idea that you need to have complete control, you loosen the bindings of stress and anxiety. Do you tend to spend a lot of time wondering “what if” when a stressful situation arises?

Do you ever find yourself running through the worst-case-scenarios of any situation? If so, learning to loosen your need for control can be a beneficial way to not only ease the tension in your life, but also allow your natural intuition to “speak up” easier.

Intuition's voice can be dampened with constant worrying and stressing about different “what if” situations. If you really want to listen to your internal voice for guidance, learn to accept that you'll never have complete control over everything.

Embrace what you can always control—yourself and your actions—and move forward from there. Once you improve this skill, you'll be able to hear your intuition more clearly.

7. If you tend to dream during sleep, pay attention to them.

Dreaming during sleep is a common human phenomenon, but it still mystifies researchers. While there are some direct scientific connections between dreaming and regulating blood pressure, metabolism, and brain function, the roles of dreaming are still a mystery.

Many scientists believe dreams are “the brain at play.” When we're awake, our thoughts tend to have a fairly logical organization and flow. When we're in a deep sleep, scientists theorize our minds experience these vivid hallucinations as a way to explore hidden subconscious thoughts, process emotions, and store memories, to name a few functions.

After waking up from a particularly strange, strong, or memorable dream, take a moment to process the “big images” or scenes you remember from your dreams. Unfortunately, many dreams that occur in deep REM sleep are often forgotten shortly after waking.

If possible, jot down some of the details in a dream journal to help you better recall them. Understanding more about what’s going on in your subconscious mind can help you develop a stronger intuition.

8. Allow yourself the freedom to test some of your hunches.

One way to develop a stronger intuition is to test some of your hunches. Even the smallest of hunches can be your intuition trying to alert you to something important.

For example, as you are preparing to leave the house, you may get a sense that you should take your raincoat with you. Even though the sun is shining, you may feel a strong urge to grab the raincoat out of the closet. Take advantage of this small and simple hunch—later, see if your hunch proved correct.

While this example is simple and fairly harmless (if you end up not needing the raincoat, you aren’t risking anything major by bringing it along for the day), allowing yourself to test a hunch can certainly feel risky. Some hunches are small, like the raincoat example.

Other hunches are much bigger. For these bigger hunches, allow yourself some clearance to trust yourself. Learning to trust your intuition and the hunches it provides builds confidence and allows you to listen to that “inner voice” more clearly.

9. Take time to practice self-care and give yourself some breaks when they’re needed.

If your mind is constantly flooded with your next to-do task or event, you’ll likely have a hard time listening to your intuition. This is another reason why having some “me time” is important to a person’s overall health.

When you are too caught up in your tasks, other people's problems, or other facets of the outside world, it can be difficult to connect with yourself and understand what your personal needs are.

This is why self-care and taking "me time" is never a selfish act. Not only are you making an effort to recharge your own batteries, but you're ensuring that you'll be more productive in the future. When you take time to clear your mind and handle your personal needs, you clear a pathway for your intuition to speak.

When your mind is too cluttered, you have a much harder time hearing your intuition when it tries to send you messages.

10. Begin to understand the distinction between your thoughts and feelings.

Humans are capable of complex thought, which is a valuable skill. Without our ability to problem solve, think ahead, and work through problems logically, we'd have a much more difficult time surviving!

However, intuition cues don't come from this thought process—they arrive in the form of feelings and urges. Learning to understand the difference between the two can help you understand and sense your intuition's cues easier.

Sometimes it can be difficult to differentiate between your thoughts and feelings. This can take practice to perfect. Whenever you are faced with a dilemma or difficult situation, take a second to slow down and ask yourself: Am I feeling anything physical about this situation, or am I using thoughts to process what's happening?

By forcing yourself to slow down for a moment, you can better understand if you're experiencing an urge from your intuition or logical thought processes. Remember that it's good to have both (logical thoughts and intuition are both useful tools), but often human beings allow logical thought to talk them out of making a choice based on intuition.

Knowing where the distinction lies between both of these for you makes trusting your intuition and trusting your logical thought processes even more powerful.

11. Establish some regular routines throughout your day.

Routines may sound boring, but they're truly a powerful life tool. When you have some predictability throughout the day, it takes some of the pressure off your mind.

For example, when you have a nightly routine of packing your lunch, you won't be scrambling to find a satisfying meal during your break at work the next day. Instead of spending mental energy on finding your food source for a midday meal, your mind is clear to think about other things.

When you're engaged in this level of routine and predictability throughout the day and allowing your mental energies to be spent on solving other problems, you can clear a pathway for your intuition to speak loudly.

"Mental clutter," or worrying about trying to piece together small details about your day, can be easily avoided with the establishment of some regular routines.

Here are a few examples of routines you can establish to make your day-to-day life a little easier:

- Make a weekly meal plan and grocery shopping list to reduce unexpected stops at the grocery store during the work week
- Create a routine for getting your laundry washed and put away in a timely fashion
- Create a routine for the last hour before going to bed so you can prepare for a good night's sleep
- Establish a plan to make sure all your bills are paid on time every month
-and so on! Routines can be established in just about every area of life where you see a need for a predictable system or pattern.

12. Allow yourself to let go of any resistance you feel when you have an opportunity to trust your intuition.

Humans are often too smart for their own good! Even when they feel strong hunches from their intuitions, they'll allow their logical thoughts to push those hunches to the side, finding a way to rationalize why those feelings might be wrong.

Everyone has experienced this on some level—a common one is during a test. Have you ever been taking a test, felt that you knew the right answer to a question, but instead of listening to your intuition, you “talked yourself out” of the right answer and chose the wrong one instead? This is a common example of resisting your intuition!

It takes practice to accept hunches and feelings from your intuition. When you have the power to over-analyze every thought or bit of information, it's tough to sit those thoughts aside in favor of listening to your intuitive insights.

However, practicing this action is a key method to learning how to “let go” of that resistance so you can begin reaping the rewards of listening to your intuition. It can feel scary at first—like diving straight into the deep end of the pool. Although it can lead to some unknowns, learning to trust your intuition and explore those strong feelings is the first step to mastering them.

13. Give yourself permission to act faster when you experience an intuitive moment.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to take time to make a big decision. Many events in life require some reflection, thought, and meditation before making choices about them. However, intuitive moments can happen quickly. Capture the full essence of these moments by choosing to “act fast” when they arise.

As mentioned in the last method, letting go of resistance is tough. Learning to act quickly when you experience feelings from your intuition requires some fast action, which can take time and practice to master.

The next time you experience a nudge from your intuition, give yourself permission to follow that feeling immediately. Is your intuition telling you to not trust someone? Don't trust them. Is your intuition telling you to buy your new car from a different salesman?

Go find a different salesman. Learning to let go of resistance and follow your intuition's cues becomes easier with practice, meaning you'll be able to sense your intuition better and better with time.

My Intuition Led To A Wrong Decision. What Do I Do Now?

Unfortunately, this scenario happens to everyone at some point: You feel an incredibly strong hunch from your intuition and follow it, only to discover later that you were wrong. Perhaps your wrong hunch led you to some kind of failure, mistake, or distrust. However, the situation shakes out, it feels terrible to be wrong about something you felt so strongly about via your intuition. How can you regain trust in yourself again after your intuition seemingly “betrays” you?

1. Ask yourself if the situation is completely over before jumping to conclusions.

Some of the toughest situations in life are tough because they feel winding or never ending. Before you immediately assume your intuition was completely wrong, determine if the situation is completely over. Until your situation has totally ended, anything could happen—your intuitive senses may have been right all along.

2. **Get back in the saddle by slowly handing the reins back to your intuition.**

After your intuition fails you, it can be tough to allow that much trust in it again. However, it's important to get back up after a setback and begin letting your intuition speak to you again. It's okay to restart this process with some smaller, lower stakes intuitive hunches and urges at first. Allow yourself to rebuild a sense of trust with your inner voice.

Much like when a close friend hurts you, your intuition was also a well trusted voice in your life who led you down a wrong path. Take your time to heal, but don't completely shut your intuition's voice out of your life.

3. **Take time to explore your thoughts and feelings about your intuition being wrong.**

Feeling like you can't trust a friend or family member brings about a special kind of pain, but when you feel like you can't trust yourself, that pain seems to double. It will take time to regain trust in your inner voice once again.

A good way to explore your thoughts and feelings about your intuition being wrong is to journal, meditate, or otherwise reflect on what happened. Your choice of self-reflection activity will give you a clearer scope into what went wrong and where your intuition failed you.

You also give yourself a clear space to be honest about how that incorrect intuition moment really made you feel. Just as you'd want to have a heart-to-heart conversation with someone else who hurt you, doing the same with yourself is a vital part of the process to regain trust in yourself.

4. Remember that intuition is the original, most natural way of knowing anything.

We live in an incredibly modernized, westernized society. As human beings became smarter, developed better tools, and gained more knowledge, their conscious thoughts became the forefront of decision making. As humans continually advanced, many placed high value on a logical and rational mind, and the idea of trusting your instincts fell by the wayside as “animal” behavior.

No matter how advanced humans get, it's important to remember that we're still animals. While we're highly intelligent and capable of complex problem solving, we're still a part of the animal kingdom. Like other animals, we have a natural sense of intuition.

Just because your intuition led you down a wrong path doesn't mean it's wronged all the time—consider whether your rational mind is getting in the way. Over time, it's become easier to shush the intuitive cues in favor of rational thoughts, which can cloud our trust of those cues.

When your intuitional cues are wrong, consider if you allowed your rational thoughts to twist or skew your original natural urges.

The Bottom Line: Everyone has an intuition, and learning to listen to yours is a valuable skill that you can develop and improve with practice.

Nobody's intuition is ever completely out of reach. Even if you feel like being able to hear and trust your intuition again is impossible, you can work your way back to a trusting relationship with yourself and hear your inner urges once again. With some regular practice (and a lot of trust and patience in yourself) you can slowly begin to develop a strong sense of intuition and use it as a tool to make better, smarter decisions.