

Twelve Ways to Make Your Intuition Work for You By Dianna Amorde

In a world where it's estimated that 75 to 90 percent of all visits to physicians and other healthcare practitioners are due to stress-related disorders, it's clearly time for a change in how we work and manage our lives. Acknowledging and using your "sacred gift" of intuition is one of the keys for making profound, positive changes—including reducing stress—in your life.

Are you ready to change the way you use your mind? Are you ready to tap into the inherent wisdom that brilliant people from Albert Einstein to Steve Jobs have known about for years? Einstein called the intuitive mind a "sacred gift," and Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computer, told the 2005 graduating class of Stanford University to "follow their heart and intuition."

**INTUITION IS
THE WAY OF KNOWING WITHOUT
THE CONSCIOUS USE OF
REASONING**

The dictionary tells us that intuition is the "way of knowing without the conscious use of reasoning." When you were a child, you likely used this form of knowing easily and without question. However, the guidance of "experts" like your parents, teachers, coaches, and clergy taught you to rely on outside data, logical thinking, and what other experts thought. So the natural ability you had as a child likely disappeared or diminished with age.

While all of that training you had in thinking logically and analytically in school and at work is important, it is only one of the ways your brain works with information. For too long, you may have ignored the potentially more

powerful ability of your brain—to access your intuition.

In the next few pages, you'll find twelve ways that have helped me and others regain and strengthen the natural ability we are all born with and can access again. You don't need to sit and wait for "ah-ha" moments to come. You can actively seek out and receive more and more brilliant insights and guidance. Follow the suggestions that appeal the most to you and watch your joy in your work increase and your level of stress decline.

BELIEVE IN INTUITION. The first—and most important—way to get your intuition working for you is to believe in it. Take some time to question your beliefs about intuition and its value. If you have a well-entrenched belief that intuition is a bunch of hooey, something "woo-woo," or only a wacky experience of women, then you likely ignore or dismiss all of the intuitive information coming your way and you might as well stop reading right now.

However, even if you're a skeptic, I recommend that you continue reading. You might find some information that will surprise you.

To help you let go of any negative beliefs about intuition, let me share a bit of information with you. Your brain is estimated to be approximately one-sixth conscious and five-sixths nonconscious (or unconscious, as some prefer to say). That means you only have *conscious* access to one-sixth of your brain power! (Perhaps an intuitive understanding of this is where the long held, but inaccurate, notion that we only use roughly 10% of our brain comes from).

The one-sixth of your brain that you are consciously aware of when you're awake is

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apparently the only part of your brain that sleeps when you do. Research shows that the other five-sixths of your brain is active and working while you sleep. While this nonconscious part of your brain includes the areas that keep your body functioning, it is also the area where memories are stored or accessed.

LATERAL VIEW OF THE BRAIN

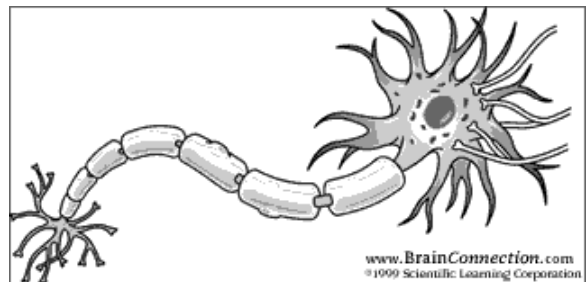


Your nonconscious brain holds many years of data and wisdom you are no longer consciously aware of. Scientists estimate that 100% of your memories and information taken in over the years are stored within your brain and body, primarily in the form of feelings and images.

Intuition is one of the key ways your nonconscious mind communicates its knowledge with you. Intuitive wisdom increases with age and experience on a job because there are more memories or data for your brain to access. Your expertise is greater than you think! If you're not using your intuition, you're ignoring the brilliance and wisdom contained in five-sixths of your brain.

PAY ATTENTION. Scientists have discovered something within our brains called the Reticular Activating System (RAS). The RAS appears to be a bundle of neurons located throughout the brain that act as gatekeepers for the millions of bits of information or impulses bombarding our senses every second.

AN EXAMPLE OF A NEURON



Your conscious mind cannot handle all of this information, so the RAS seems to selectively “send up” information to your conscious mind. How does the RAS determine what’s important for you to be aware of? There appear to be two primary determinants: 1) any threat of danger – real or imagined; and 2) what you’ve been thinking about.

A great example of how your RAS is affected by what you think about is the purchase of a car. Until that time, you probably had a lot of other things on your mind and paid little attention to the cars around you. All that changes when you start checking out new or used cars.

As you begin to hone in on the model you want, you start to notice that everyone in town seems to be driving the car you’re thinking about or have just purchased. That’s because while you were thinking so much about this new car, it rose to the top of an imaginary list of priorities or what’s important within your mind. Imagine that the more you think about something, someone, or a situation, extra

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energy or “juice” gets attached to it which is noted by your RAS.

Let’s assume that you’re zeroing in on a new BMW convertible and you think you want a black one. Now your RAS sends to your conscious awareness any impulses or images of a BMW convertible and even a heightened awareness of all BMW’s and black cars within your view.

Your Dream Car?

Euphoria. With a view.



Your RAS Will Make Sure You See It!

So now you notice the car on the highway out of the corner of your eye, the picture of it on a billboard, or the cars parked around you at the mall. These same images were likely in view before, but because they weren’t important before —cars didn’t show up on your internal priority list—you ignored them. You can thank your RAS for that.

Now all of a sudden the idea that what you focus on is what you bring into your life starts to make sense. We’re literally wired for that to be the case!

When it comes to your intuition, it has likely been “speaking” to you much of the time, but because it wasn’t on your internal priority list to look, listen, and feel for intuitive messages (instead of searching outside yourself via data, expert opinion and other sources), you didn’t notice them.

Unfortunately, you need the help of your RAS to receive most intuitive information because many times this information is not logical or practical, like the historical data or expert

opinions you’re used to using to help you make decisions.

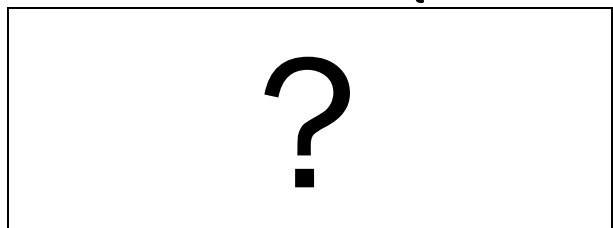
Intuitive information comes to you via ideas that pop into your mind, goose bumps, chills up and down your spine, gut feelings, symbolic images that strike you as “the answer” when you see them or dream about them, and many other ways that don’t involve thinking your way to the answer or studying the data in front of you. Because of this, if you don’t actively seek out intuitive guidance, you might miss it.

However, if you tell your RAS that noticing intuitive information about a particular challenge is important and you’re hunting for the answer, then you’re more likely to notice the goose bumps, gut feeling, or chills that signal that you’ve found an important piece of information.

Start paying close attention to your body, feelings, and thoughts. For example, when you “know” something is true, how do you “know”? Where do you feel it in your body? The better you understand how your body sends you signals, the easier it will be to know when your intuition is trying to speak to you.

ASK QUESTIONS. One of the simplest ways to begin strengthening your intuition and getting it to work for you is to start asking yourself open-ended questions designed to call forth your inner knowledge.

KEEP ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS



If you keep asking yourself the same question every hour or every day, the answer you’re

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looking for, or the “ah-ha,” will come. Perhaps the intuitive insight won’t reveal itself immediately, but it will come if you keep priming your nonconscious mind to offer up its wisdom to you.

For example, many people tell themselves that the idea of “do what you love and the money will follow” is a great notion, but the problem is they have no idea what they love. If that’s you, my belief is that you really do know what you love. That knowledge is just buried under a lot of internal dialogue, thinking about what others have to say, and old beliefs that convinced you years ago that what you love doesn’t bring in any money, is stupid or silly, or just won’t work at your age, and so on.

In order to cut through all of that stuff, begin to ask yourself every morning and evening (ideally just before you go to bed) If I could do anything I wanted for a living, I would _____. Don’t just ask yourself this once. Ask it daily until you have a personal “ah-ha.” Sometimes asking a question out loud is all you need to do. Other times writing for five minutes without thinking about what you’re writing is a good way to get at your intuition.

Set a timer for 5-10 minutes. Use blank paper and without lifting your pen from the paper, write in a continuous stream “If I could do anything I wanted for a career, I would _____.” At first, you might write, “I don’t know, why am I doing this stupid activity,” but if you keep writing, you just might reveal some profound information.

Let’s go back to the idea of keeping at this writing exercise or questioning exercise until you receive an “ah-ha.” You might not know how you’ll know when you’ve had an “ah-ha.” That’s okay. Just think back to when you’ve been certain about something or someone. When you told someone, “I just knew I had to _____,” or “My gut instinct told me to hire this guy.”

After you have the example in your mind, think about how you knew. It’s that feeling in your gut, the chills up and down your spine, or the goose bumps that help you know to “Pay attention! This information is really, really important.” And if you’re still not certain, just pick the answer you wrote or that popped into your mind that has the most appeal for you. And start “playing” with that idea.

Ask yourself, “what if I decided to pursue a career in acting (or whatever career popped into your head)?” Ask yourself this question for a few hours or days in a row and jot down all of your reactions. Of course some roadblocks will likely come up. After all, there’s a part of you (not to mention family members and friends) that is horrified at the dramatic changes the switch from a career as a bookkeeper to an actor would bring about.

Now that you’ve got all of the issues out on the table, ask yourself if there’s still an emotional “spark” when you imagine being an actor. If so, then ask yourself another question. Is there a way I can test this idea out without quitting my job? And the answer is likely yes for any question because there is almost always a small step you can take to test the idea out first.

In the case of our imagined bookkeeper, he can obviously take acting classes, try out for local plays that rehearse and run weeknights and weekends. If his answer to the question “If I could do any kind of work I wanted” was truly an “ah-ha” or inner knowing (a call of the soul), then these small steps will bring such joy and enthusiasm to our bookkeeper that he will begin to gain the confidence to take the necessary steps toward his ideal career.

DISTRACT YOUR LEFT BRAIN. While there is no one spot or definitive source of intuition found within your brain (although some researchers think the temporal lobe area of

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the brain might be the seat of intuition), scientists estimate that intuitive information comes to our conscious awareness via the right hemisphere of the brain – the intuitive or creative side.

We use both sides of our brain all of the time; however, the vast majority of us have a favorite or dominant hemisphere that influences the way we think and process information. When we can learn to effectively use both modes of processing information, we have the genius associated with people like Albert Einstein. Einstein was able to first daydream and imagine the solution to problems with the talents of his right hemisphere and then move into his left hemisphere to come up with ways to articulate the solution and create a plan to deliver it.

There are various models for behavior and brain dominance that use a four-quadrant approach, pointing out that it's overly simplistic to say we are either left hemisphere or right hemisphere dominant individuals. However, for the purpose of understanding why you or your peers may feel more or less comfortable with the idea of intuition, this simple model works.

The chart below notes some of the ways in which the left and right hemispheres of the brain tend to differ.

Left Side Versus Right Side of the Brain

LEFT Hemisphere	RIGHT Hemisphere
Logical	Intuitive
Analytical	Nonlinear
Verbal	Visual/Image
Sequential	Holistic
Dominant	Lets Left Side Lead
Reductive in thinking	Inclusive in thinking
Right side of body	Left side of body
More men	More women

Unfortunately, most of us have spent much of our lives being trained to ignore or devalue the benefits of daydreaming, imagining, and intuiting the solution to problems. Also, the elevation of, and reverence for, “left brain” thinking in schools, labs, and boardrooms, created negative beliefs associated with being “intuitive;” therefore, you might resist efforts to develop (or re-create) intuitive neural pathways. As mentioned earlier, you may need to let go of old beliefs and re-program your mind to allow access to your intuitive information.

Because the left hemisphere tends to dominate the right, you can sometimes help your intuition along by doing activities that make no logical sense and therefore shut down the left hemisphere of your brain. Betty Edwards talks about this in her acclaimed book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. Edwards explains that we all have an ability to draw, but that most of us have let our left hemisphere so dominate our thinking that we get in the way of allowing the image to transfer from our brain to our hands.

Similarly, we may be so focused on logically thinking our way to a solution or creative idea that we can't “hear” our intuition. One way to get out of your left brain is to use random photos or images to jog your intuition.

While it may seem ludicrous, using a random photo from a magazine or a card from a tarot deck to help you find the answer to a question allows your intuition to speak. Because this activity makes no sense to your left brain, it's at a loss for a moment—only a moment. The trick is to pay attention to the first thoughts or images that pop into your head when you look at the image.

Another option is to take a moment and look about your office, rest your eyes on an item or

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photo and ask yourself what that item might have to say about the challenge you're facing. Remember that your right brain is visual and tends to let the left brain lead. Doing something this abstract and ridiculous gets your dominant, verbal left brain out of the way and lets the right, intuitive brain "speak" to you.

DO NOTHING. Because intuitive messages are usually delivered via subtle nudges (gut feelings, goose bumps, and so on), soft sounds or inner voices, or images that pop into our heads while daydreaming, many of us miss them. We're so focused on our immediate problems, rehashing the past, or worrying about the future that we miss all of the inner guidance being sent to us. The simplest way to handle this is to give yourself permission to sit quietly and wait for the answer to come.

I confess, this is one of the options that I find challenging. I'm constantly coaxing myself into meditating and taking quiet time. One way I get around this, is to literally ask myself a question and set the timer for ten to fifteen minutes to wait for the answer. If I'm feeling particularly restless, I will pose the same question to myself, but this time I'll play a few rounds of solitaire on the computer! The game keeps my left brain busy and allows my intuition to speak to me. Some of the most powerful guidance has come to me this way.

The point is to honor yourself and your ways of receiving information. To "do nothing" may look different for you than for me. Maybe sitting on a park bench looking at the sunset is your way of doing nothing. The whole idea is to simply cut down on the noisy distractions (both inner and outer) and allow your intuition to communicate with you.

SPEND TIME IN NATURE



Even five minutes of dedicated silence at the beginning or end of your day can have a profound effect on your ability to access your intuition.

WALK IT OUT. When doing nothing is not an option for you, or you feel a need to burn some energy in order to allow your intuition to speak, take a walk. This can be a very powerful way to get clear on the right next step, particularly at work. Leave your office and go for a twenty minute walk. Before you leave, take a deep breath and ask your nonconscious mind to solve a particular problem for you and guide you to the correct answer.

As you walk out the door, tell yourself that you'll know the next step when you return and then let it go. This is important! The walk is not for going over and over the pros and cons or challenges of possible solutions. The walk is for burning off stressful energy, and clearing the way for your intuition to speak to you. It can't do that if the chatter in your mind is nonstop about all of the possible outcomes of a decision.

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TAKE A WALK!



A view from Town Lake Trail in Austin, TX

Distract yourself with the beauty of nature around you, the architecture of the buildings or other physical images. When you start to think about the problem, tell yourself that the answer is coming and image it popping into your head soon.

PLAN YOUR DREAMS. Now that you know that five-sixths of your brain is working while you sleep, it makes sense that so many people experience “aha’s” and answers to challenging questions in their dreams or upon waking the next morning. I’ve had people share powerful stories of seeing an image of the solution to a design challenge (a builder), waking up in the middle of the night with the answer to assigned problems (an engineering grad student), and more subtle dreams guiding people to the right next step in their lives.

Tell yourself that you will remember your dreams and keep a pen and paper by your bed to record any images, feelings, or ideas that are with you when you wake up. People who are left brain dominant tend to find dreams an easier way to access their intuitive

wisdom because they are receptive to it when they sleep!

If you’re really intrigued with the intuitive information your dreams can reveal, look for a Jungian analyst or other dream expert to consult with, take a class on dream analysis, or read books on ways to analyze your dreams.

AFFIRM ITS POWER. Our nonconscious minds take what we tell it and the images we give it literally. This is why affirmations have the ability to help us transform ourselves. If we keep repeating positive phrases that are in the present tense, our brain begins to take the statement for fact and adjusts our awareness accordingly. We begin to notice the things, people, and situations that support this new belief about ourselves.

When affirmations don’t work, it’s usually because there is a hidden belief that counteracts the affirmation. That’s why it’s important to uncover what your beliefs are about intuition. You don’t want anything hindering your ability to affirm your powerful intuitive skills.

At my workshops on intuitive intelligence, I ask participants to say a series of Facts-In-Progress™ (my name for affirmations and a reminder that if you keep repeating these statements they will literally become facts for you) about intuition. Here are a few of them:

- I am highly intuitive.
- I receive intuitive information with ease.
- My intuition is always accurate and working for my highest good.

What are some affirmations you can repeat to yourself—with positive emotion—that will support your use of your intuition? Don’t underestimate the power of this simple

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activity to help you make your intuition work for you.

Another way to make this process more effective is to write down your affirmations daily and add supporting statements. My friend, Kathy Garland of Quanta Partners offers an excellent tele-class series called *The Power of Your Pen* to help you get beyond old habits and create a new powerful process of affirming and declaring the statements that support a new you. (www.quantapartners.com)

TRUST. I'm sure you've heard before that you need to "let go," or "detach from the outcome" in order to achieve what you want. It's no different for intuition. When you try hard to get your intuition to speak to you it seems elusive and fickle. However, research shows that what's really going on is the effects of stress (worry, trying too hard) are likely negatively affecting your ability to access your intuition. Your intuition isn't as elusive as it seems – you're probably unconsciously behaving in ways to block the flow.

Relaxing, taking deep breaths, or walking away from the problem for awhile can allow the information you need to come to you with ease. We've all had the experience of trying to remember someone's name and feeling frustrated that it wouldn't come to us, only to have it pop into our heads a day later.

If you make a conscious effort to relax, trust that the answer will come, and let it go, you can speed up this process. You'll stand a much better chance of actually retrieving vital information from your nonconscious mind when you can use it!

TUNE INTO YOUR BODY. As I've noted throughout, your body is a vital source of intuitive wisdom and can save you from poor decisions if you will only pay attention and heed its wisdom. Unfortunately, most of us have been trained to put all of our attention on what's going on in our heads or in the

world around us, so we are cut off from the wisdom of the body.

Start paying attention to where in your body you feel an "ah-ha" or a "knowing." It's no accident that intuition is called "gut instinct" or "gut feeling" by so many people. You might be one of those people who literally experience a tightening in your gut when something doesn't feel right about a situation or a person, or a warm glow in the gut when you feel good. Or, you might feel something in your heart or chest or shoulders or neck.

You might be waiting for intuition to come to you in the form of a vision, voice, or words on a page when your body has been sending you intuitive information all along.

CHECK IN. Literally take a few minutes to consciously check in with your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves to gauge their reactions to an important decision or next step. Remember that you are nothing more (or less!) than a bundle of energy and the most powerful energy is energy aligned in one direction with one purpose. When you are in internal conflict, you become ineffective and you have to work extremely hard to get anything accomplished.

The next time you feel like you're battling uphill to accomplish something, stop and consider that maybe you are! Check in with all aspects of yourself. Are you feeling positive or excited about a project? Does your stomach do a happy dance or an "I'm ill" dance when you think of this project? What are your thoughts about it? Do you feel the project fits with your values, mission, or essence of who you are?

If there are too many "no's" or negative reactions, then it's probably wise to work on something else for awhile, take a break, or change course. Just because you can't consciously "see" why you feel a need to do something else, doesn't mean that there isn't

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a powerful reason why. Your inner guidance doesn't have the same physical limitations your conscious mind has. It might know that something else needs your attention right now or that the timing isn't right for other key players in your project. Just trust the wisdom and take a break or switch gears.

LIGHTEN UP. Perhaps the most important way to get your intuition working for you is to simply lighten up and not take things so seriously. Be playful with your intuition.

CHILDREN ARE NATURALLY INTUITIVE



Remember, you naturally had this ability as a child. Like a child, have fun with seeking out its wisdom.

One of the questions I receive most often about intuition is, "how do I know that it's really my intuition that's speaking and not just wishful thinking or fear?" Unfortunately, there is no definitive answer to that question. For each person, it's different. But I do know, that if you give yourself permission to play with the intuitive information via asking different questions, looking at different images, imagining different results, and paying attention to how the different scenarios feel, you'll be led to the right answer for you for that time.

There are no guarantees when it comes to intuitive information and there are no guarantees when it comes to using decision

models, opinions of experts, or historical perspective. All I know is that I've found my intuition to be a truly sacred gift and when I honor it, I am tapping into a wealth of wisdom within me and within my soul. So when push comes to shove as the saying goes, I'll go with my gut every time. Then, I'll play with my decision and keep checking in and altering my course as needed.

In her book, *Awakening Intuition*, Dr. Mona Lisa Schultz talks about developing the "wise mind." Your wise mind develops when you honor and use both your intuitive mind and your logical, analytical mind. Putting all of your effort on logically thinking your way to a solution and physically and mentally working to bring about the result you want is to use only a small portion of the wisdom your brain and body have access to.

Develop your wise mind and make your intuition work for you. This sacred gift is meant to be used. And remember, you are far more brilliant than you think you are, so trust your intuition and take an inspired leap today.

About the Author: Dianna Amorde is an Architect of Ah-Ha Moments and the president of Inspired Leap Consulting Inc. She works with people who are ready to make a change and inspires them to confidently leap toward their dreams.



To find out more about upcoming workshops or to contact Dianna, go to www.inspiredleap.com.