When Your Intuition Can Lead you Astray

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I’m sure you have felt it many times in your life, an effortless, unreasoned sense of truth. Like a flash, you get it and don’t know exactly how or why. You only feel in your heart that it’s true. Intuition. Is it real and can it ever fail you? The truth of the matter is that your intuition will almost never fail you. But I need to add that, under certain circumstances and without understanding our emotions and belief systems, it is possible for your intuition to lead you astray.

We women grasp truth by intuition. It’s bigger than we realize. We rely on our intuition to acquire expertise, creativity, love, and spirituality. We use it to sharpen our thinking and deepen our wisdom. Our intuition allows us to listen to the creative whispers of our unseen mind. In essence, intuition is a process of direct knowledge, knowing without taking the time to reason. Intuition is implicit knowledge.

Intuition has been explained by some well meaning people in ways ranging from the unlikely to the completely ridiculous but the phenomenon itself is very real. In fact, we probably would not be able to survive without it. It would be difficult for us to recognize objects, tie our shoes, or find our way to work. Most of our interactions with the world depend on implicit knowledge. For example, we need to implicitly know that, if we step off the edge of a cliff, we will fall down.

There’s been a lot of interesting and useful research in regard to women’s intuition.

Are we women actually more intuitive than men? Should we make our decisions based on our intuition or gut feeling? Research is showing that women are much more open to “practical wisdom” than men. The best teachers, doctors, and entrepreneurs learn this wisdom as implicitly as they use it.

Moreover, women are much more open to others’ emotional, nonverbal messages than men. Today’s science seems to not want to dismiss the concept of women’s intuition but to fortify it and understand it better. Our intuition is a wonder. But it can sometimes be perilous.

The times that our intuition leads us astray most often is when our thinking is obscured, if we don’t have enough information, or when we allow our emotions to take over. There are times when our thinking can become cloudy and we doubt our intuition. Your intuition will almost always lead you without fail if you follow it AND think for yourself.

To say that our intuition is infallible wouldn’t be true. But it is almost always right. We just have to keep it in perspective and begin to understand when our emotions or a lack of information can cause our intuition to lead us astray.
Confusion

I remember one time when I was working with a small group of girls on a project for a college civics course. We had gotten toward the end when I spotted some errors in our facts and became concerned about them. I brought my concerns to the rest of the girls who were certain I was wrong. They all explained to me that I was mistaken and that the project was fine to hand in as it was. I told myself that I must have been confused and that since they are all in agreement, I should go with the flow. Even though I was trying to convince myself, my gut was telling me otherwise. Wouldn’t you know, we received a C because the professor pointed out the same factual errors that had been bothering me all along. This was the first time I realized that the influence of a group can cause us to doubt our intuition. When a group believes one thing and your gut tells you another, you are far more likely to override your intuition and make the wrong move.

Out of Sync

When we are feeling particularly emotional about something or someone, we can also find ourselves out of sync with our intuition. At the start of a new relationship or during the anticipation of an event, we ladies will often confuse our intuition with our emotions. This is especially true when we try to anticipate how we’re going to feel after a particular event. Studies have

Intuition Exercises

Exercise 1

✓ Find a place to sit comfortably.
✓ Close your eyes and follow your breath. Count ‘1’ on the inhale and ‘2’ on the exhale.
✓ Once relaxed identify what you’d like more understanding about.
✓ Focus on it for a few minutes.
✓ Ask for guidance
✓ Let it go.

(Don’t worry if you don’t hear or see what you are looking for at first, just sit with it. It will show itself at a later time)

Exercise 2

• Ask yourself?
  ✓ What is bothering me?
  ✓ Why is this bothering me?
  ✓ What are my beliefs about this situation?
  ✓ What advice would I give someone close to me?
  ✓ Are you ready to accept the answer?
shown that we accommodate illness, disability, breakups, and defeats more readily than we intuitively expect. Our emotions tell us that something is going to be painful or that we’re going to have a hard time “getting over it”.

But the truth is that we recover from these types of events far better than we think we will. The anticipation is always the worst. We need to learn to trust ourselves, trust our gut, and trust that, when we allow it, the truth will show up.

The Shoulds

How many times, as a woman, have you been told that you “should” want something but your intuition is telling you something completely different? Throughout my life, a lot of people felt like they knew what I should want out of life. I was going to become a CPA (so I was told) and settle in to a quiet, conventional life. When people we trust or people of authority are telling us what we should want or what we should believe, this can cause a major disconnect with our intuition. There are some people that we believe know more than us or we see as an authority figure. We can have a tendency to believe them at times and start to doubt our own inner truth. Thankfully, I listened to mine. The world is better off not having me as a CPA. When you face those times in business when others are attempting to tell you what to believe or what you should do next, I ask you to do two things; first make sure you have all the information you need to make the right choice. Then, find some quiet time where you can simply ponder the situation and allow your intuition to lead you in the right direction.

In all the years I’ve been working with women, I’ve seen that we have a tendency to become disconnected from our intuition when we attach ourselves to a particular outcome and stake our self worth on it. We can’t relax during these times. We believe that, to keep our self esteem, we need to perform at our best and things need to turn out in a certain way. This puts our mind under a great deal of pressure. Think of it this way. What if the person you love the most told you that, unless you got a very lucrative, prestigious job, they wouldn’t love you any more? Their love would be tied to you getting this job and being able to buy them lots of things. It sounds absurd, right? It’s insane to think that someone you love the most would tie their love to something so arbitrary. Well every time you get attached
to an outcome, you’re doing the very same thing to yourself. You’re often saying to yourself, “if this doesn’t turn out right, I won’t love you anymore and I certainly won’t treat you with respect. If you screw this up, I’ll never trust you to do anything again. I guess I’ll have to endure the pain of being stuck with you forever because you’re all I’ve got. But I don’t have to like it.” Do you ever talk to yourself this way? Imagine how this can cloud your intuition and block your real truth from emerging. I encourage you to, again, make sure you have all the information you need, engage in the right activities, and let your intuition guide you from there.

So is our intuition ever wrong? Yes and no. A recent study from New York University showed that we evaluate everything as good/bad/right/wrong within a quarter of a second. So before we engage in a rational thought, we find ourselves loving or hating a piece of art or our new neighbor. People have always made errors based on their intuition. People believed the earth was flat and that the sun circled the earth because their intuition told them so. Your intuition might tell you that Reno is east of Los Angeles – but you’d be wrong. Bright people sometimes believe dumb things. Even the most intelligent people make costly intuitive errors. We can even create false memories. Often when we are “seeking knowledge”, what we are actually doing is trying to find evidence that supports our current belief. We’re not exactly going about things objectively. We really need to work hard at not fooling ourselves. But sadly, we are all quite skilled at fooling ourselves and usually find ourselves to be the easiest person to fool.

Even as our intuition is telling us something, we can’t just stop there. As I’ve mentioned a number of times, we have a responsibility to question ourselves, our decisions, and even our intuition. When we aren’t armed with enough knowledge or information, our intuitive “truth” can be based on incorrect information or an irrational idea (remember the flat earth). Relying on our intuition alone can and will lead us to make arrogant or costly decisions. “I’m right because I just know it” can backfire and cause consequences we’re not prepared for.

So when should we listen to our intuition? My short answer is ALWAYS. But don’t make hasty decisions based on intuition. It’s not as if your intuition will suddenly stop speaking to you in regard to a person, event, or situation. You don’t need to “act now” for your intuition to be effective. When your intuition is telling you something, pay attention to it all the time. In addition to that, question everything. Question your level of knowledge around that person or situation. Question your feelings about it. Question your emotions and see if they are playing
too big of a role in your feelings. Don’t give in to your arrogance and your need to support your beliefs. Once you have thoughtfully gone through the situation or event in your mind and feel as if you have examined the situation fairly and with an open mind, then listen to the quiet but persistent voice of your intuition, you’ll find that you’ll make the right choices almost every time.

**Key Points**

Your Intuition Can Lead you Astray When:

- You are in a group that holds a different opinion “Group Think”
- Someone you trust or look up to has a different point of view.
- You are clouded by emotion
- Your beliefs or expectations are conflicting you (The Shoulds)
- You are not ready or willing to accept what it is telling you
- You are starting with inaccurate information (The world is flat)