

A gut instinct is worthy of discussion because of the gut/brain connection.

The enteric nervous system (ENS) relies on the SAME types of neurons and neurotransmitters as the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord).

There are over 100 million neurons involved - in fact, if your small intestine were spread out, it would cover a football field!

And while this gut/brain connection won't give your prefrontal cortex functionality (no deep, abstract thinking), it does influence mood and well-being.

Scientists tell us the brain/gut connection also plays a role in some diseases, as well as straight-up digestion.

And while the brain gets involved in regulating how your heart works, did you know that digestion is independent of the brain?

In other words, the gut knows and the gut does - all by itself!

That's how fascinating your gut is, and part of emotional intelligence is learning how to trust and DISCERN what a gut feeling IS.

But before we go there, there are two things to be aware of:

1. Gut feelings can be eerily accurate.
2. Gut feelings can be flat out WRONG.

Gut feelings are both scientific (though still being researched) and more woo-woo intuitive.

In the Harvard Review, Gary Klein makes a case-

"The trust in intuition is understandable - but also dangerous. Intuition has its place in decision-making - you shouldn't ignore your instincts any more than you ignore your conscience, but intuition is a fickle and undependable guide and just as likely to lead to disaster as to success."

Intuition is the ability to acquire knowledge or understand something immediately without the need for conscious reasoning.

A healthy gut, of course, is going to help with gut feelings.

This is something we can develop. How, you ask?

1. Meditate - turn your lens inward.
2. Notice - use all your senses.
3. Pay attention to your dreams and thoughts--there could be something in there that will boost your intuition--you never know.
4. Journal - there's insight there!
5. Feed your gut! Pre and probiotics HEAL your gut - you can also do this by managing your stress and supplementing with L-Glutamine.
6. Movement - Serotonin is mostly in your gut. When you move, it exposes itself.
7. Connect with nature - grounding, forest bathing - go for a hike!

Cheryl Strayed said on trusting your gut:

"Don't do what you know on a gut level to be the wrong thing to do. Don't stay when you know you should go, or go when you know you should stay. Don't fight when you should hold steady, or hold steady when you should fight. Don't focus on the short-term fun instead of the

long-term fallout. Don't surrender all your joy for an idea you used to have about yourself that isn't true anymore. Don't seek joy at all costs.

I know it's hard to know what to do when you have a conflicting set of emotions and desires, but it's not as hard as we pretend it is. Saying it's hard is ultimately a justification to do whatever seems like the easiest thing to do - have the affair, stay at the horrible job, end a friendship over a slight, keep loving someone who treats you terribly. I don't think there's a single dumbass thing I've done in my adult life that I didn't know was a dumbass thing to do while I was doing it. Even when I justified it to myself - as I did every damn time - the truest part of me knew I was doing the wrong thing. Always.

As the years passed, I'm learning how to better trust my gut and not do the wrong thing, but every so often I get a harsh reminder that I've still got work to do."