

Gut Instincts, Learning to Listen to Your Intuition

By Faye Pietrokowsky

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Einstein called intuition the highest form of knowing. It has been defined as a thought or a feeling that appears without rational precedent. Some are convinced that it is magical. A few believe that it doesn't exist. Still others feel intuition is as natural as the air we breathe.

It may serve as a best friend warning us to avoid people and situations. Have you ever had a strong feeling while you were driving that you should slow down, get into another lane of traffic or take an alternate route? Have you ever telephoned a friend or a relative out of the blue for no apparent reason? This may be intuition talking to you. It inspires us like a coach, cheering us on with reminders to participate in activities and to contact people we love.

Although intuition affects and influences all of us, many people don't acknowledge it. Few are willing to embrace, and truly allow it to become an integral part of their lives.

Much of human communication is nonverbal—the eye contact, the gestures, the distance between people, the color and type of clothes that people wear, the tone of voice, etc. Communication experts estimate that as much as 93 percent of what we are really saying is done through our clothing, tone, facial and hand gestures, posture, eye contact and spatial distance. Simply put, we really don't say much with our words. This explains why when interviewing

potential employees, managers say they know within the first 30 seconds if the person will be hired.

Parents often detect changes in their children's mood or behavior. How often have you as a parent intuited a problem? You just knew that something was different.

Intuition In the Classroom

While intuition is invaluable in the home, it is equally valuable in the classroom in

assessing and detecting mental and emotional states. Teachers can and do use their intuition in everyday interactions with their students. Many professionals who work with children, including teachers,

counselors, principals, superintendents and therapists, rely on their gut instincts and reactions when interacting. One school teacher called intuition “unconscious pieces of information that come together to help me see what might work.”

In the face of school violence, paying attention and following hunches or gut feelings will become more important. Children will often reveal their inner states through body language. A lack of eye contact or less eye contact is a signal that something isn't quite right. Physical absence or withdrawing from friends or a preoccupation may be more obvious than other signals. Parents often think they are imagining things,

Continued on 2nd Page

Continued from Page 1, Gut Instincts

but you probably aren't. Just because You don't have tangible proof does not mean that it is a figment of your imagination.

Often adults know that a child is trouble, but may not know how to address the issue with the child. Often parents, not wanting to accept what they intuit will rationalize or make excuses. "He was really sick and that is why he missed school."

Some parents may welcome teacher information and feedback, and actually express gratitude that the teacher was alert and concerned enough to say something. Indeed, parents can foster an open relationship with teachers and other school officials encouraging both negative and positive feedback. A simple statement that you value any and all communication concerning your child may be enough to alleviate a teacher's or administrator's fears about approaching you.

Make Intuition Your Friend

Parents and teachers can learn to befriend their intuition. When you find yourself paying attention to a child, ask yourself why. You may even ask yourself, "What does any intuition have to tell me about this child?" Remember that most of what we know about our world comes from our interpretation of people and situations, not

Faye Pietrokowsky, owner of Inner Design, speaks, coaches, and trains businesses to use intuition in the workplace to increase productivity levels through sales, hiring, firing, and overall decision-making. She is currently writing a book on intuition. She can be contacted at (503) 221-2123 or faye@inner-design.net.

Visit her website at www.inner-design.net.

from what we are told. If something about a child disturbs you, investigate. The evidence will usually surface, and you will start noticing behavior.

The next step is to take action. Perhaps you will have a conversation with your child which may open the door for better communication. If you are wondering what to do with this information that you have intuited, take a moment and ask yourself what would be the best way to deal the situation. Listen-your intuition will talk to you.

Here are some suggestions that will help in encouraging children to develop and use their intuition.

- Allow your child to have imaginary friends.
- Don't criticize your child for comments that seem to come from nowhere or that don't seem logical.
- Actively engage your child's intuition in a playful way by asking him what he/she thinks about a situation or person.
- Let your child know that people around us reveal themselves through their actions, not their words.
- Teach your child to stay away or seek the help of adults if they feel that danger is present.
- Intuition is a skill that can be learned, not a secret. DNA codiscoverer James Watson wrote, "Intuition isn't mystical. It's a sort of background sense of how things should work. It is facts hidden in the brain."