

Intuition and sustainability

1. What is intuition?

Many of us can cite examples of times when we have used our intuition or perhaps been aware of it and yet ignored it; for example picking a time to have a difficult conversation with a friend or knowing which turning to take at an unfamiliar and poorly signed road junction. Another example might be: after walking into a room where two people have been arguing, we might say something like “You could cut the air with a knife” – but what do we mean by that? We probably mean that we have picked up enough signals or communication from within the room to “guess” that an argument has just taken place. If we were to try and explain exactly what signals we got that caused us to decide this, we can’t always give a detailed answer. Perhaps we picked up clues from body language or tone of voice of those concerned, but even these do not always explain how we know – we just know.

Defining exactly what intuition is can prove more challenging. It would seem to be some kind of tool that is used by our subconscious minds and can connect us to information that we are not normally consciously aware that we know. Also it seems to be very different to our powers of reasoning. It is unique as a thinking tool and is not based on logic but rather on faith.

It is important to note that our intuition is not infallible. It is simply another source of thought and ideas. Since intuition draws on our latent wisdom and knowledge, it rarely works so well in areas with which we have little familiarity. For example, it is less likely to help us in choosing a gift for someone we don’t know than it is in choosing a dish off a menu for a loved one.

2. Why is it important?

Intuition can greatly enhance our ability to think for ourselves and to make decisions. In fact, some would say that merely relying on our conscious minds for this actually reduces our capabilities.

Our intuition is always operating for us. Unfortunately, we don’t always listen to it or act on it, because thoughts arriving from our intuition appear to be out of place, stray thoughts, impossible to explain rationally. When we do trust our intuition “miracles” appear to happen, amazing coincidences occur and opportunities present themselves.

When we are anxious about something in our lives, a major decision for example, then we succumb to fear, the negative self-talk takes over and we project negative energy. On the contrary, when we trust our intuition, we can relax knowing that our subconscious mind will know the answer and that the world is a safe and abundant place. Our focus is then on the positive and we increase our chances of achieving our aims.

3. How do we access it?

Intuition can use subtle means of communicating with our conscious minds. It has a tendency to transmit in ways that are unfamiliar to us and that our conscious mind does not register such as through thought, feelings, sensations, imagery, sounds or various combinations of these. It doesn't necessarily happen just while we're awake, either. Messages from our intuition can arise whilst we're asleep, during dreaming.

Unfortunately, due to the subtle nature of our intuition, it can be easy to ignore. It is not usually as loud as other messages being transmitted inside our brains and so is sometimes drowned out. So, partaking in activities that quieten the mind seem to work well in helping us access our intuition. I'm thinking here of activities such as meditation, prayer, yoga, quiet creative pursuits, dream analysis and relaxation techniques.

It can take some courage at first to learn to trust the power of our intuition and we can gradually gain confidence in its effectiveness through practising using it.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge how we already use it. We can, for example, spend a few days noticing when our intuition is at work. We can practise being aware of the forms of language our subconscious is using and be receptive to it. Then it is essential to learn to relax because the strongest signals from our intuition come when we are feeling calm.

Cultivating our own intuition requires continual learning and development. This is because intuition uses latent knowledge and skill. This means that intuition works best when we are committed to our personal development.

4. Living sustainably involves getting in touch with our heart's desires.

Wanting to live a more sustainable lifestyle for many of us originates in our values. When we are living in harmony with the planet and conserving its resources we feel we are being authentic because those things matter more to us than materialism and over-consumption.

Neil Crofts, in his book "Authentic. How to make a living by being yourself," sees our recognition and use of intuition as an essential part of our authenticity. He says:

"Most of the poor decisions we take are, in fact, dysfunctional emotional decisions justified and influenced by carefully selected data. The reason for this is our lack of self-confidence. Our upbringing has taught us not to trust our emotions or intuition and so we are unable to trust our emotions to help us to take balanced decisions using both our rational and emotional powers... The only way we can do this is by learning to trust ourselves and learning to take decisions with an open mind and an open heart, based upon the rational evidence and on being able to listen to and trust our intuition. In a word, by being authentic."

In living an authentic life, we reduce the stresses we place on ourselves to be something we are not. So, using our intuition can put us in touch with our heart's desires and help us make the decision to lead a more sustainable lifestyle or not. If we choose to do this by downshifting, then our intuition can assist in deciding which way to do this and how far to shift on each step of the journey.

5. The spiritual connection

Living sustainably involves being aware of our part in the grand scheme of the universe – being at one with nature.

There is a connection between intuition and spirituality. Whether you believe in God, a spiritual energy, universal essence or light, or something else, it can be said that intuition is just one of the virtues connected with it. The others can be seen as creativity, trust, love, joy, inspiration, aspiration, caring and giving.

When we operate from our spiritual selves, we feel centred and overflowing with abundance. We feel love and compassion. It is then that our fears start to disappear. Acknowledging our spiritual selves can give us access to the subconscious mind and thus to our intuition.

Conclusion.

Living sustainably involves not just reducing, reusing and recycling but being realistic about our expectations, valuing ourselves and what we create and being part of an abundant universe, rather than part of a materialistic one. The emphasis is different. Materialism involves grasping and hoarding, whereas abundance involves giving and creativity. By using our intuition, we open the way to a more abundant, inwardly rich and sustainable way of living by using our heart's desires in decision making.

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