

— CHAPTER ONE —

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*What Is Intuition?*

There is a universal, intelligent life force that exists within everyone and everything. It resides within each one of us as a deep wisdom, an inner knowing. We can access this wonderful source of knowledge and wisdom through our intuition, an inner sense that tells us what feels right and true for us at any given moment.

Many people who are not accustomed to being consciously in touch with their intuition imagine that it is a mysterious force that would come to them through some transcendent mystical experience. In fact, our intuition is a very practical, down-to-earth tool that is always available to help us deal with the decisions, problems,

and challenges of our daily lives. One way that we often describe an intuitive prompting is as a “gut feeling” or a “hunch.”

Intuition is a natural thing. We are all born with it. Young children are very intuitive, although in our culture they are often trained out of it early in life.

We are accustomed to thinking that some people are intuitive and some aren't. Women are generally considered to be more intuitive than men, for example. Yet many men follow their hunches on a regular basis. In reality, we are all potentially intuitive. Some of us consciously develop this ability, while a majority of us learn to disregard and deny it. Still, many people are unconsciously following their intuition without realizing it.

Fortunately, with some practice most of us can reclaim and develop our natural intuitive abilities. We can learn to be in touch with our intuition, to follow it, and to allow it to become a powerful guide in our lives.

In many cultures, including those of most of the indigenous peoples of the world, intuition is acknowledged, respected, and honored as a natural and important aspect of life. Every moment of daily life is guided by a strong sense

of connection to the universal creative force. These societies create powerful rituals, such as group councils, dream sharing, chants, dances, and vision quests, that support their connection to the inner intuitive realms. Individuals within those cultures learn to trust and follow their own inner sense of truth and offer it as their wisdom to others. They have a profound sense of the interconnectedness of all life.

Our modern western culture, on the other hand, does not acknowledge the validity or even the existence of intuition. We respect, honor, and develop the rational aspect of our nature and, at least until recently, have disregarded and discounted the intuitive side.

Our school system reflects and reinforces this bias. It focuses almost exclusively on developing our left-brain, rational abilities and mostly ignores the development of the right-brain, intuitive, holistic, creative capacities. We often see the same bias in the business world. Only in recent years have some schools and businesses begun to truly value intuition, and to encourage the kind of creativity and progressive thinking that results from intuitive awareness.

The rational mind is like a computer — it processes the input it receives and calculates

logical conclusions based on this information. The rational mind is finite; it can only compute the data that it has received directly from the external world. In other words, our rational minds can only operate on the basis of the direct experience each of us has had in this lifetime — the knowledge we have gained through our five senses.

— 24 The intuitive mind, on the other hand, seems to have access to an infinite supply of information, including information that we have not gathered directly through personal experience. It appears to be able to tap into a deep storehouse of knowledge and wisdom — the *universal mind*. It is also able to sort out this information and supply us with exactly what we need, when we need it. Although the message may come through a bit at a time, if we learn to follow this flow of information step by step, the necessary course of action will be revealed. As we learn to rely on this guidance, life takes on a flowing, effortless quality. Our life, feelings, and actions interweave harmoniously with those of others around us.

In suggesting that our intuition needs to be the guiding force in our lives, I am not

attempting to disregard or eliminate the intellect. Our rational faculty is a very powerful tool that can help us organize, understand, and learn from our experiences, so of course it is important to educate our minds and develop our intellectual capacities. However, if we attempt to direct our life primarily from our intellect, we are likely to miss out on a great deal. In my experience, it works best to balance and integrate logic with intuition.

Many of us have programmed our intellect to doubt our intuition. When an intuitive feeling arises, our rational minds immediately say, “I don’t think that will work,” or “What a foolish idea,” and the intuition is disregarded. We must train our intellect to respect, listen to, and express the intuitive voice.

Most of us have spent a lifetime developing our rational minds. Fortunately it doesn’t take a long time or a lot of work to develop our intuitive abilities. In fact, I’ve facilitated thousands of people in this process and I’ve found that with a little explanation and practice the vast majority of them are able to get in touch with their intuition and begin following it on a regular basis. From there, the whole process of balancing logic with intuition happens easily and naturally.

*Intuition and Instinct*

People often use the term instinct interchangeably with intuition. In reality, instinct and intuition are different, but related.

Animals live by their instinct, a genetically programmed part of them that naturally directs them toward survival and reproduction. Human beings are animals and we also have instinctual energies that prompt us toward self-preservation and the preservation of our species. In addition to instinct, we humans have intuition, a faculty which gives us a much broader spectrum of information, related not only to our survival but our growth, development, self-expression, and higher purpose. Instinctual behavior is usually similar in all members of a given species, whereas intuition seems to be fine-tuned to our individual needs in any given moment.

As human beings have become more “civilized,” we have tended to repress and disown our instinctual energies, such as aggression and sexuality. To some extent that may be necessary to have an orderly, law-abiding society. If our instincts become overly repressed, however, we lose a lot of our life energy, and our natural capacity to take care of ourselves. When we

disown our instinctual energies we often lose touch with our intuition as well. So we need to develop a healthy balance of intellect, instinct, and intuition. (We will discuss more about developing and balancing the different energies within us in chapter 8.)

### *Intuition and Psychic Ability*

When people begin learning about intuition, one question that often comes up is, “What is the difference, if any, between intuition and psychic ability?”

The word *psychic* can be frightening for many people. They may associate the term with weird, far-out phenomena. Some may have had a confusing or disturbing psychic experience themselves or know someone who has. They may have read about or encountered psychics who are strange, flamboyant, inaccurate, or untrustworthy. Some people have simply seen too many Hollywood movies in which psychic abilities are presented in a dark and frightening way.

The terms *intuitive* and *psychic* are often used more or less synonymously. If intuition is equated with psychic ability, some may fear that developing their intuition will lead them

somewhere they don't want to go. Others feel the opposite: They are fascinated with the idea of being psychic and for various reasons want to develop that ability.

I would like to clarify my understanding and use of the two terms. As I have said, intuition is a natural ability that we are all born with. If our family and our culture support our intuitive gift, it will develop into a natural and practical asset. If not, it may go undeveloped unless and until we choose to consciously focus on developing it. Some people, however, have an especially strongly developed intuitive sense. They may be born with it, or they may develop it early in life. These are the people we think of as natural psychics. Others may consciously *choose* to develop their intuitive abilities to the point where they become psychic.

People who are psychic may receive a great deal of intuitive information about themselves and others. Like any other talent, this can be a mixed blessing. Their challenge is to learn to manage this ability in such a way that it works in their lives.

So we are really talking about a spectrum of experience.

UNDEVELOPED ——— DEVELOPED ——— PSYCHIC  
 INTUITION                      INTUITION                      ABILITY



On one end of the spectrum, we have not developed our intuitive gifts. As we move to the center we are learning to follow the daily, moment-to-moment intuitive feelings that nudge us in the direction we need to go. They are not usually very dramatic and they generally give us only the information we need at that moment. If we move farther along the spectrum we may have more frequent and perhaps more dramatic experiences in which we have a strong feeling, a clear vision, or receive a lot of information. There is an infinite range of experiences on this spectrum, and we may fluctuate at different times to different places on the spectrum. For example, sometimes a person with a totally undeveloped intuition has a spontaneous dramatic psychic experience.

This book is focused primarily on helping you explore and find your balance in the middle ground of the spectrum. It's about accessing and learning to trust your natural intuitive ability so that it can take its rightful place as a positive guiding force in your life. Wherever you currently are on the spectrum, it can help you get comfortable with your intuition in a simple, practical way that really works in your life.

RECALLING AN INTUITIVE FEELING  
EXERCISE

Throughout this book there will be a number of exercises and meditations to help you develop your intuition. Some of you may wish to keep a journal or notebook to write about your experiences and insights.

Get in a comfortable position, close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths.

See if you can remember a time when you had a strong hunch, a gut feeling, or a feeling of “knowingness” about something. How did it come to you? How did it feel?

Did you follow it? What happened as a result of following it or not following it?

If you want to, write a little bit in your journal or a notebook about this experience.

If you didn't remember ever having a hunch, gut feeling, or feeling of knowingness, that's perfectly okay and normal. Many people are not in touch with their intuition in this way yet. Read on....