

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE INVISIBLE

How to live the benefits of intuition in a skeptical, show-me world.

by Marlee Alex

“Be still, and know” — Psalm 46:10 (NKJV)

Conventional thought suggests you dismiss intuition, that power to know without knowing how you know.

And yet ...

Carla sensed within a few days of meeting her new office mate that he wouldn't make it in banking, even though he appeared to be doing well and seemed bright, mannered and professional.

On their first date Sondra knew Steve was the man she would marry.

Leaving worship service one Sunday, Kate felt something was troubling her minister, not that he'd expressed or done anything out of the ordinary. Still, the feeling nagged her.

“Unreliable,” skeptics scoff.

“Unquantifiable results,” science teaches.

“Dangerous,” the Church suggests in a silence that censors the discussion, let alone practice, of intuition.

Yet people like Carla, Sondra and Kate — all Christians — hold tenaciously to intuition's importance. They've found it an illuminating force in their lives: a way to better reason personal decisions, discern obstacles from opportunities, improve the success of business decisions, resolve issues from the past, navigate the changing waters of relationships and better tune in to God.

As proof Carla tells how her office mate quit his job within six months to go back to school and pursue a medical career. Sondra and Steve just celebrated their 15th anniversary. A year after those troubled Sunday-morning inkings, Kate's minister confessed to a longtime secret affair.

“Yet our culture has somehow learned to mistrust and misrepresent the mind,” observes Guy Claxton in his new book *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind* (Ecco Press). The tortoise mind, as he refers to intuition, is indeed a partner to the hare brain that relies only on physical data, and “we think less intelligently if we ignore it. Intuition can be wrong, but that does not mean it is worthless. Some of

our best ideas ‘pop’ into our minds. Yet slower, intuitive, more poetic and contemplative tortoise-minded thinking is treated as recreational, marginal and sloppy. Meanwhile harebrained thinking — in a hurry, under pressure to produce results — is considered lean and efficient.”

It's a practical thing

What if Claxton's tortoise-thinking theory is right and we should pay more attention to intuition? What if, as the Scriptures hint (Luke 12:32 and 17:21; Psalm 139:14, and 1 Corinthians 12:8), intuition is a God-given function of intelligence designed to help you?

Or is intuition something to beware, some New Age way of thinking or mystical force?

No, writes Laura Day, a self-described “practicing intuitive” and author of the best-selling *Practical Intuition* (Villard). Intuition and intuitives are not to be feared, she says: “I'm not magical, New Age, psychic or a spiritual leader — I'm just your basic, strait-laced Jewish woman” — a woman who believes in listening to your life and for God.

Day explains how intuition fills in where external information fails. It's another sense continually at work to serve up information to benefit you and enlarge your sphere of influence. It goes beyond what you see, smell, hear, taste and physically feel, to what you sense emotionally.

That's why “the less you know about a subject or topic, the more effectively your intuition comes into play,” Day says. Intuition gives you glimpses of realities in bits and pieces, usually as symbols, and on many levels, that you must assemble to see a coherent picture of your life.

Carla understands. She hadn't observed anything that tipped off her co-worker's ill-fit with the job. “It was simply a hunch,” she says, “going with my gut.” For Kate that nagging thought was her intuition telling her to

seek God about how to pray for her minister. Sondra says, “I just knew I needed to follow my heart after an ‘aha!’ moment when Steve, a book lover like me, grabbed an old volume in this certain, carressing way.”

“Intuitive people are likely to comment, ‘I had a strong feeling,’ or ‘something told me,’” writes Barbara Berg, a doctor of psychology and author of *The Crisis of the Working Mother* (Summit). That's why they get such flack, she says. Intuitives put stock in a finely honed capacity for knowing without the conscious use of reason. They allow their minds to wander in new directions, helping recognize new trends or hear what may be contrary to past experience. Berg quotes an entrepreneur who says while colleagues heard one thing from clients, she “listened to the same words and heard another,” discerning needs even the clients themselves weren't first able to articulate.

That's also why Berg's convinced, “We don't need to know how intuition works to use it.”

Using the third eye & other ear

Wendy Hitchcock, 49, an artist in McMinnville, Oregon, understands how to use this eye for the invisible. “I am always looking for what's hidden, for God speaking,” says Hitchcock, who explains she perceives the world as life stories with layers of meaning made visual.

She tells of a time when, deeply depressed, she began walking the fields around her farmhouse: “I came upon an old apple tree in the walnut orchard. Although hollow and dead on one side, the other side produced sweet fruit. I stood in front of that tree and knew it was a portrait of me. Although decimated by recent circumstances, I needed to appreciate what remained.” She began to call the apple tree “my bipolar tree.”

When a psychiatrist later diagnosed Hitchcock's melancholy as bipolar (an affective

KEEPING KIDS' INTUITION FROM EXTINCTION

disorder causing swings from normal moods to manic depression), a drug was prescribed "to make life easier." The drug did wipe out Hitchcock's depression, along with all her other emotions and intuition.

The result devastated her more than the depression, she says: "Intuition is how I wonder at things and receive answers. There are times when I'm supposed to just hunker down and listen. In those times, if I haven't kept my intuition honed and exercised, I become blind and deaf."

She laments choosing to numb her feelings rather than work through them: "I didn't trust my intuition and say, 'Yes, I have a dark side, but I will learn to integrate this into my life.' Nor did I see how the depression was just a blip in my existence — something that could bear fruit later."

It was in that mournful state that Hitchcock returned to the fields around her home and discovered her husband had pruned away the bipolar tree's dead side while she was out of town.

"I was horrified," she says, but again, intuitively, saw the pruned tree as a portrait of herself. "Ever after the apples, which used to be sweet, are bitter" — a sign, she believes "that for that particular season of my life I was supposed to wander my field and know the dark sides have a purpose."

Hitchcock does not suggest, as Laura Day would never advocate, that one should rely on intuition as the sole basis for decisions (Day: "intuition should never replace good judgment, but add to it"). But Hitchcock does agree with Claxton's *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind*: We shut off part of the mind by shutting off intuition. The balance she discovered: "I've learned to prime the pump each morning by being quiet, journaling a record of conversation between my Lord and myself, and to look for deeper layers in everything."

Ask, wait & receive

Contemplation. Recording and listening to your life story. Conversation with God. Intuition comes in these specific states of waiting, Day says. You feel, see and hear more clearly because, she insists: "You are already intuitive. You just need to get back in touch with that part of yourself." These steps lay the groundwork:

- **Ask the right question.** If you face a dilemma, a good one to start with is, "What is wrong with this picture?"

- **Observe closely.** "You already know more than you think you do," Day insists, but you may be called upon to alter the way you see. "Things are hitting us over the head all the time." Even in simple matters, like remembering where you put your gloves, you get

new ideas by learning where to shift your attention.

- **Discern patterns.** Everything that happens around you has meaning. Don't worry if things don't make immediate sense, Day says: "They often don't because intuitive information is rich and complex." With study, though, patterns will emerge. Refer to that when the larger picture starts to form.

- **Reflect on the patterns.** Pay attention to clues, even subtle ones, that resonate with you in an emotional way, like your reactions and those of others. Synthesize and interpret the data like a foreign language. You must rigorously interpret and integrate your impressions with other mental processes, which Day says dispels the common misconception that intuition means not having to think.

- **Wait for clarity.** "As children we treat all our perceptions as real," she says, "but this ability is trained out of us as we grow up." This mental censoring becomes an automatic, unconscious process. If it's hard for you to translate intuitive data into insight, Day suggests you assign a pretend meaning. This often precedes or generates real answers. Be patient. Wait for things to line up clearly.

Live the moments

While these steps to practicing intuition help you connect your material world with the invisible reality, it will not make everything rosy, Day notes. That's all right with her, she says: "I don't want my environment perfect. I work very hard to live in the moment."

Intuition merely clarifies things so you can engage in the work living requires of you. Noelle Quinn, 50, a Christian writer (*When He Leaves*, Chariot), discovered this when her intuition awakened her to her husband's sexual addictions and affairs. "I knew nothing about intuition at the time," she says. "I had been taught to pray, read the Bible, visit Christian counselors — but the way God helped me put the final pieces in my difficult puzzle came from within." That is intuition's greatest benefit, she says: As you gain confidence in your ability to get insight, you learn to accept the things you cannot change; change what is possible, and trust God to work everything else together for good.

With the psalmist's words in mind — to "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), — are you ready to start developing this creative gift? ✨

Marlee Alex, a writer and editor in Sisters, Oregon, relies on intuition in a freelance career that requires consistent openness to new directions.

FROM EXTINCTION

If anyone can make the case for the value of using your intuition, Barbara Beasley can.

As a mom of two youngsters, executive producer of the Yellow Dyno video series and vice president of marketing for NEST Entertainment,

Beasley works to help children listen to that still, small voice inside, that sense that danger is ahead.

"A lot of children have been taught to bypass their intuition," Beasley says.

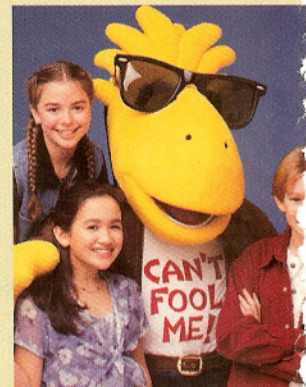
They're taught to be obedient, nice, respectful, the things that can override those innate feelings, or cause you to talk yourself out of your God-given fears in situations like walking down a dark alley with a threatening stranger behind you.

Yellow Dyno, a sort of Barney-turned-Elvis in leather bomber jacket and shades, champions children's safety by encouraging them to pay attention to situations where they feel uncomfortable.

The videos put the principles to song and dance. For instance the song "When You Trust Your Inner Feelings" explains intuition this way: "You see it lives way down inside / And it's there for all your life / You know it's really very smart / It's the light of your own heart / When you're light says something's wrong / You should act, not wait too long / When you're feeling all alone / You have the power to be strong."

Then Dyno cautions children to act upon what their sixth sense may be telling them: "Take three steps back, run like the wind and tell someone you trust" or "Yell to someone that this is not your Mom or Dad" — the sort of actions that can keep a kid from a kidnapping, molestation or other harm.

"So many times we find that Christian parents are more secure that these things will never happen to their children because they believe God will protect them or that they have a more watchful eye and are more involved in their children's lives," Beasley says. "I believe that — and I also believe that God gave us an intelligence to use."



Yellow Dyno and pals teach caution

— Jeanette Thomason