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3 Strategies to Following Your Intuition Toward Success

Instead of having to be the ones with all the answers, take a break and let the answers come to you.



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IMAGE: Getty Images

If you're a regular reader of this column, you may know that many of the topics we discuss here come from a yearlong leadership development program based on my work called Leadership Circles. This month in Leadership Circles, we have been focusing on what we call *seeing possibility*.

Seeing possibility is the opposite of working really, really hard. It's a shortcut through the noise and the busy-ness to a more peaceful, easier way to work and live. So often we wrack our brains trying to figure things out, make decisions, make things happen, get the answers, build something from scratch--all good ways of going about our business, but sometimes it all seems so hard. *Seeing possibility* is an approach that lightens things up. Instead of having to be the ones with all the answers, you take a break and let the answers come to you. It's like listening to the radio. You don't have to *make up* the station. It's already there. Just tune in.

When you *see possibility*, the answer you've been searching for (whatever it may be) may come from a flash of insight or a gradual knowing, or it might be prompted by an external event. The answer may even reveal itself in your circumstances. Your job is not to make it appear, your job is to recognize it when it does. Just as you tune your radio through the static until you arrive at a clear signal, you are tuning your mind to the messages you're receiving until you arrive at the answers you seek.

There are a few different ways of tuning into the message.

Draw out the meaning. One way of tuning into the message is to look for "signs" and draw out the meaning. "Drawing out the meaning" is a technique sometimes used by coaches to help people access their intuition. It means using the environment around you as if it were filled with secret messages to tell you what to do.

For example: You're on Section Nine of the research report you're writing. You listen to Track Nine of a CD to clear your head. Track Nine turns out to be very short. Does Section Nine also need to be short?

Or, You're going through an extremely difficult time. You're anxious and stressed. You walk outside and a gust of wind blows over you. Could it be that this situation will blow over as well?

These are just little mind games. Tricks. Playing with words. But they are tricks and games that help you open your mind to new possibilities, new ways of seeing and understanding.

Notice everything around you. Observe the details, the sounds, even the smells. What's happening? What do you notice? Then wonder, if this tiny slice of life had something to tell you, what would it be?

Seek serendipity and synchronicity. Another way to tune into the message is to seek Serendipity and Synchronicity, those twin tendencies for life to deliver enchanting coincidences just when we need them.

Serendipity is unexpected good fortune, or discovery by accident. Synchronicity is a timely, meaningful coincidence.

Put them together and you have those mysterious moments in which you accidentally discover exactly the right thing at just the right time. These are a couple of examples:

- Caroline discovered that her 10:00 meeting was cancelled just as she was thinking to herself, "If only I had an extra hour."
- Ginny was still fretting over fresh news that her accountant was about to quit when a long lost friend--a CPA--called to ask if she knew of any job openings.

"It's a sign!" you think. A wink from the universe. A little gift. If you pay attention to these moments when everything "clicks," you might just uncover new possibilities.

Learn to trust your instincts. Yet another way you can tune into the message is to learn to trust your instincts. Earlier we talked about the importance of making room for your intuition; you also need to be able to recognize the messages, listen, and act in keeping with whatever's true for you.

What does your intuition feel like? Some say it feels like a zing, a snap, or a click. You might feel it in your stomach, your chest, or your heart. For one person it's a calm, perfectly still knowing. For another it's a heavily weighted thunk. Another describes a sudden peace; another a taptap of the mind.

When possibilities fall right into your lap, you may feel like some invisible force has granted your silent request. It's often accompanied by a feeling of speechlessness, almost disbelief. When you feel that, the search for solutions is over.

All three strategies are all ways of accessing information that seems to be around us all the time, but that somehow we manage to miss. To expand your awareness of what's possible, sometimes you just have to notice: look for "signs," then ask yourself what they mean. Watch for serendipity and synchronicity, and follow where they lead. Then stay alert to your intuition, learn what it feels like, and practice following it.

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