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Creativity - The Subconscious

Intuition is derived from the latin intueri meaning looking or knowing from within.

"Intuition is the function that explores the unknown, senses possibilities and implications which may not be readily apparent" Carl Jung

Evolutionary biologists claim that intuitions main purpose is physical growth and adaptation to insure the perpetuation of our species. Adequate information is required to protect against threats to our life and provide the opportunity to achieve our full potential. Intuition is a sensory process that is triggered by interactions both inside and outside our bodies. These influence our performance affecting behavior, feelings and thoughts enabling us to move involuntarily or receive factual information that provides direction for our decisions about what moves to make",

Only within the last two decades has it become acceptable to acknowledge the important role our subconscious plays in everyday life without experiencing too much ridicule. Intuitive decision-making based on research by Dean and Mihalsky (1974) found executives of the companies that more than doubled profits had a far higher intuitive ability based on predictive testing. They also found dynamic people who got more done in a day also had a far higher intuitive score. As the great management 'guru' Tom Peters and Robert Waterman said "It is probably only the intuitive leap that will let us solve problems in this complex world. This is the major advantage of man over computer."

Human beings have the ability to symbolise experiences in our minds, our thinking is not limited to the real or present. Intuition delivers information through flashes of insight or hunches and gut feeling attaining knowledge unfiltered by rational thought. This capability empowers our thinking by enabling us to simulate possibilities, anticipate and plan the future. By using visualisation and imagination we can generate ideas that have no correlation to the world of experience.

As research into creativity has developed the importance of the subconscious in creativity has become very apparent. So what can we do to increase our intuitive and subconscious faculties? The answer is a lot, although many of these tools require a long term focus with limited short term results, sustained practice is the key to success. The benefits of being intuitively in tune are immense in terms of increased creativity.

The sub-conscious plays an important role in problem solving. Many significant breakthroughs in science the arts and business did not arise from pre-existing knowledge: the creative process on which science is based frequently operates at the level of the subconscious. The ability to think hard about a problem, stop and do something else frequently leads to new ideas and answers at a later date. The barrier to developing intuition is stress; the inability to relax prevents the inner and outer senses from working together keeping the mind on guard against non-serious activities. This results in difficulties using thinking skills that are necessary for fluent and flexible thought.

How not to be intuitive

Before you start to develop your intuition you must remember that you will not awaken your intuition if you are lost in a tense noisy world, are in emotional or mental turmoil or when you are stressed. Nor will you respond to intuitive signals if you are reliant upon words. Intuition is impaired by; wishful thinking, acting out of fear, being too embedded in a sense of ownership or you project personal needs onto someone or something. Don't expect intuitive knowledge to come to you with flashing lights and booming voices in the sky. Intuitive messages are often very subtle and easily missed if you are not being aware.

How to be intuitive

You will awaken your intuitive abilities when you are in a state of relaxed attention which is STILL, CENTERED and RECEPTIVE. To use intuition effectively, simply believe it works and you can receive guidance from your higher self. The more it is used the more available, quicker and powerful it becomes.

"It is with the heart that one sees rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." Antoine de Saint-Exupery, French aviator and author (1900-1944), from The Little Prince

Through the release of irrelevant tension your full energy and attention to the task at hand is present. Relaxation is important to thinking generally this is because we think holistically using our bodies as well as our brains. Overly tight muscles divert attention, restrict the flow of blood, waste energy and stress the nervous system,

leading to an uptight body and thoughts. Physiologists have shown that some muscular tension is required to generate and attend to mental processes, some but not too much: i.e. the core of creativity a state of 'relaxed attention'.

The importance of relaxed attention to creative thinking is well known. Typically after a period of intense focus, letting the problem incubate whilst taking a shower, a walk or sleeping may let the subconscious form a solution. The sudden flash of insight requires relaxation to let thoughts flow and attention to be aware of it before it is lost. A survey by Chick Thompson found that being in the toilet, in the shower, commuting, driving, dozing in meetings; nighttime, sermons or exercising and manual labor are the best places to get an idea using relaxed attention. More importantly no one claimed to get good ideas in the office and also every setting involved fun and pleasure.

Physical relaxation techniques provide an excellent way to break cycles of fear, worry and tension. Through relaxing physical tensions, the ability to maintain a negative psychological state decreases and the ability to think creatively is enhanced. As Chick Thompson's list indicates there are two ways to achieve a relaxed state, dynamic and passive. Dynamic, involves activity; passive, involves lying down and going limp.

Getting the message

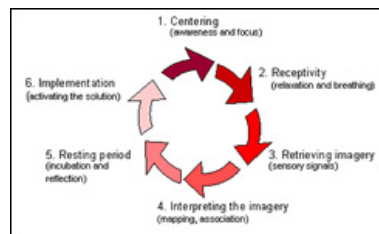
Intuition is non-rational, non-linear, insightful, non-data based, and read in the body as an extension of the five senses. There is always a preferred sense for example listeners may tilt their heads to one side until they hear the answer. Visual people may squint then focus when they see the answer. Touch people may rub their thumb and forefingers together until they feel the answers. In all cases intuition includes a heightened sense of awareness through the senses. Therefore in order to develop heightened intuition learn to intuit through your preferred natural sense.

Intuitive signals are received through the senses in five main ways;

- Physical (body) Gut feelings, stomach ache, tension headache, adopting another's pain.
- Mental (mind) Eureka or aha effect, pieces of a problem converge to form new theories.
- Emotional (heart) Immediate like or dislike, change of mood, without logical provocation.
- Spiritual (soul) Awareness of a connection beyond the physical world.
- Environment (place) Cues from the environment sending messages.

Clarity of mental images ranges from detailed to blurred impressions. Vivid and clear imagery is frequently not desired in visual thinking, these impressions are informed through multi-sensory input. Mental operations that involve abstraction, flexible manipulation and creative synthesis are obstructed by detail. Visual memory on the other hand is generally facilitated by clear imagery, as is the visualisation of concrete ideas.

The Intuitive Problem Solving Process.



How to ask questions

Be careful what you ask for you may get it. You must be careful with the questions you ask of your intuition because you will surely answer them. An ancient example of an ambiguous question put to an intuitive occurred in ancient Greece. A powerful ruler about to invade the lands of an enemy kingdom asked the Oracle at Delphi whether a great battle would be won. The oracle responded in the affirmative. The oracle was correct; the battle was won. Unfortunately for the king, it was by his rival. Had he known as much as you now know about questions he would have asked a question along the lines of "will I successfully invade my rivals kingdom tomorrow" or better still "will I successfully invade my rivals kingdom tomorrow at an acceptable cost?"

Its easy asking questions we don't intend to ask for example suppose you ask "will it rain tomorrow" the answer has to be "yes" because somewhere in the world it will rain. A question properly phrased is half answered. Understanding what you are asking often reveals much of the answer. Poorly phrased questions are ambiguous and can be interpreted in more than one way.

Three requirements of a good question

1. The question must be specific and unambiguous so a precise answer is possible "will it rain this weekend for on the round Lake Taupo cycle challenge".
2. Each question must be simple rather than compounding "Will I get the Jones contract and be promoted" (intuition will address the first half)
3. The question must be directly relevant to the issue you want to know about. Know what you are asking. don't ask "is Twiddletech a good company" when what you want to know is whether Twiddletech are financially secure and represent a good investment.

Once you have relaxed and received an image through your senses you will need to figure out what this means, as these messages are rarely literal. For example your

problem is should to accept a contract offer. a Kauri tree may indicate that your answer is strong, rare, growing, green or expansive you then need to decide out which one is relevant to your situation and resonates with you.

Key ideas for developing your intuition.

- Honor Respect flashes don't label any as silly or coincidental.
- Brevity / simplicity Express flashes in a brief word, talking is for the logical brain.
- Symbol/picture/imagery Intuition turns on pictures for you to receive.
- Suspend assumptions Use inputs as naively as possible avoid preconceived ideas.
- First impressions Initial ideas are usually correct.
- Faint stirrings Respect weak impressions as strongly as the blinding flashes.
- Active / passive Intuitions can come unexpectedly or when consciously sought.
- Relax Letting go of tension helps with receiving impressions.
- Associate Freely associate to the imagery will help unravel symbols.
- Playful moments Enjoy the process; fun weakens analysis strengthening the flow

Intuition can extend your awareness to an unlimited extent. With intuition you can project your awareness to any time and place. The goal of applying intuition is to direct awareness to gain useful information. We choose what we encounter and make decisions about what we notice. Some notice beauty other grime. Where we can really use the conscious mind is in noticing the choices we make. If we find ourselves only seeing the negative we can notice that preoccupation and then look for the good.

Don't dither; trust your gut instincts

When decision making gets tough – trust your gut instincts. Research published in 'Current Biology' shows that in some instances snap decisions are better than endless pedantic pondering and logical weighing up. Test subjects (what we non-scientists know as 'people') were asked to pick the odd one out on a screen covered with more than 650 identical symbols, including one rotated version of the same symbol. They performed better when they were given no time to linger and were forced to rely on their subconscious to select the correct answer.

Dr Li Zhaoping of University College London said: "You'd expect people to make better decisions when given time to look properly, but this was not so." He explained: "The conscious or top level function of the brain, when active, vetoes our initial subconscious decision – even when it is correct – leaving us unaware or distrustful of our instincts." So thinking too much about a decision can leave us worse off. This is what happens with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, when the subconscious knows very well that you have turned the gas off, but the conscious brain gets too involved and throws the whole thing into doubt, forcing you to check fifty times!

So the famous Milton Erickson's injunction to 'trust your unconscious' is now backed up by research. Your conscious logical brain doesn't always make the best decisions.

Exercises

The Intuitive process

- Relax,
- Think of a problem that you would like to find an answer to for example;
 - Resolve a personal issue
 - Important decision at work
 - Understand unpredictable personality
 - New perspective for positive action
 - Discover a creative or innovative approach
- Frame the problem correctly based upon questioning structure and write it down.
- Elicit an image. Which of your senses were engaged during the process?
- Draw a mind map using words you associate with the image you received. Do any of the words link, can you see a pattern?
- If you have time, forget the answer and allow your subconscious to process the ideas generated.
- Decide upon a course of action.

Cultivate Mindfulness

Pick a small, mundane task: scrubbing your teeth, washing a pot, sweeping the sidewalk, booting up your computer, writing a check. Before you begin the task, pause and talk to your body and soul, "We are going to get this pot clean now." Then, "We are picking up the pot now; we are turning on the hot water now; we are getting the pot scrubber soapy now; we are holding the pot with our left hand and making scrubbing motions with our right hand; Ah, look! The pot is shiny now right here!; Now we are getting this last dark spot off the pot; now the pot is perfectly clean; now we are rinsing it; now we are putting it on the dish rack to dry; now we are finished cleaning the pot." Feel every step, noticing how much your body, in its childlike simplicity, enjoys each part of the process. Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Washing the dishes is like bathing a baby Buddha."

What's the Message?

Imagine that:

1. You have one of those days where every errand has to be done twice, everything you buy has to be returned, and most people either don't notice you or misunderstand what you're saying. Stop. Feel and describe what's happening in your body. What emotions are lurking below the surface? What's the message?
2. Your lottery ticket wins you a fair-sized amount of money. Stop. Feel and describe what's happening in your body. What emotions are lurking below the surface? What's the message in the day's event?
3. You trip and sprain your right ankle, then later in the week come down with a head cold. Your eyes are watering badly, and everything feels swollen and sore. Stop. Feel and describe what's happening in your body. What emotions are lurking below the surface? What's the message in the week's events?

Provoking insight

Some suggestions for enhancing skills that will provoke insight.

1. Immerse yourself in others projects and be yourself.
2. Ask questions that clarify hidden aspects of issues in different ways.
3. Identify hidden assumptions and help them by posing ambiguities.
4. Make provocative statements that lead to additional insights.
5. Help people to search for solutions not just one answer.
6. Help others to balance their feelings and thoughts in order to balance intuition and analysis.
7. Help people to shift their way of doing things so they develop new habits.
8. Help others to discover flaws in their thinking.

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