

Why Intuition is Essential—And How to Listen to It

OTs Need to Listen to their Inner Consciousness

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Have you ever had a feeling, a "hunch," or an "inner knowing" about something, but couldn't explain it in rational terms? Chances are it was your intuition communicating with you. Our thinking, judging, analytical, and rational minds tend to dominate us, but there is another way of knowing.

Intuition is a way of knowing without conscious reasoning. We all have it. We are born with it. It may be thought of as an aspect of cognition. However, that describes only part of it. It is not solely a mental process. In fact, it is beyond or different than rational and logical thinking and can be used in combination with it.

It may be accessed and more clearly experienced while in calm, meditative, or relaxation response states. It may be referred to as being in the flow, wisdom, the higher self or witness consciousness, love, the soul, spirit, the truth, the heart, God, or higher power. It can be experienced through all of the senses: feelings, felt sense/touch, emotions, vision, hearing, taste, and smell. It may also be experienced as images in your mind's eye, symbols, flashes of insight, or in dreams. Just like everything else, it is a form of energy or frequency.

Benefits of Intuition

Intuition is a great tool we all have that is underutilized. I hope someday to see intuition classes taught in schools and universities, just like logic classes are taught, because it is just as important to develop, and has its own unique perspective and many benefits.

All of us can benefit from listening to and developing our intuition. It can assist you and your clients with personal development. It provides wisdom, guidance and direction, and assists with making the best choices at the time. It can assist with imagination, creativity, innovation, and problem solving.

It can be taught to clients to enhance life skills, health, healing, prevention, and wellness. It may give a person a greater understanding of themselves, and strengthen self-confidence, self-esteem, self-love, self-acceptance, and compassion for the self and others. It can help a person to understand why something is happening and how best to proceed. It can help give meaning and purpose in all aspects of life.

It can calm and balance anyone who experiences mental or emotional challenges, overthinking, worry, stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, or PTSD. It would help those who

are extra-sensitive to discern their thoughts, emotions, and energy vs. those coming from others or their environment. It can enhance healthy boundaries and facilitate healthy relationships.

When accessing your intuition you will likely experience a greater connection to something beyond yourself or a higher part of yourself. It may strengthen your sense of peace and spirituality, which can create better health and joy.

Where Intuition May Come From

A simple illustration of where intuition may come from is that it is the "right brain" thinking that is often associated with creativity, the arts, and imagination. Logical thinking is "left brain" thinking. However, it likely comes from more than that.

It may include the "third eye." This is an energy center on the forehead which corresponds to the pineal gland. When this energy system is balanced it affects the central nervous system and can assist the integration of the two sides of the brain.

It may come from the heart. HeartMath Solutions, whose mission is to facilitate a fundamental shift in health, well-being and consciousness, has studied the heart and brain coherence. They found that the heart informs the brain more than the other way around, and the two work simultaneously together.

They state, "Most of us have been taught in school that the heart is constantly responding to "orders" sent by the brain in the form of neural signals. However, it is not as commonly known that the heart actually sends more signals to the brain than the brain sends to the heart! Moreover, these heart signals have a significant effect on brain function -- influencing emotional processing as well as higher cognitive faculties such as attention, perception, memory, and problem-solving. In other words, not only does the heart respond to the brain, but the brain continuously responds to the heart."

Intuition may come from spiritual connections such as God, higher power, angels, guides, the soul, or nature. It may be a deep connection to the self, our true selves, or authentic self. It may be a combination of all of this.

How Intuition Can Enhance Your OT Practice

Practitioners can learn to strengthen their intuition and teach it to those they serve to help them in their lives. Intuition can help you in your own life and with your own self-care. Intuition can assist you to be more confident, balanced, and centered. It can help you to be more present and calm with your interactions with others. It can assist with the best clinical decision-making, and improve rapport with your client.

There are many holistic approaches where the fundamental component is intuition. For

example, it is accessed and experienced easily through meditation and relaxation techniques. Guided imagery accesses a person's intuition and inner wisdom to bridge the communication between the mind, the body, and the spirit. In energy healing the practitioner uses intuition to assess and direct energy. Many forms of bodywork such as massage therapy, reflexology, and craniosacral therapy.

A Grounded Theory of Intuition

A study, "A Grounded Theory of Intuition Among Occupational Therapists in Mental Health Practice," published in 2010, explored occupational therapists' understanding and use of intuition in mental health practice. Therapists reported that intuition is a valuable tool and propose that intuition be considered alongside analysis within a clinical reasoning framework.

Most participants reported that intuition is integral to practice. A senior therapist felt that there had been an overemphasis on evidence-based practice and assessment tools to the detriment of intuitive practice: "I'm really concerned about the big focus on assessment, because no one seems to know what to do next. They'll just do another assessment... but when that becomes... the propeller or the kind of windscreen, then it seems to me that that can actually limit your availability to other... kind[s] of messages."

Participants stated that although they used intuition in practice, they attempted to hide this from their colleagues. They were concerned that their use of intuition could have negative implications for their credibility, and that others would discover that they based clinical decisions on feelings and inarticulate knowledge. They reported changing their language to be more medically oriented when communicating with other health professionals, rather than admit to using intuition.

How to Access Your Intuition

Intuition can be accessed by calming and minimizing mental and emotional activity. Our intuition is often speaking to us and we may not fully hear it. Our rational thinking, desires, emotions, and attachments can keep us from listening.

Any activity that puts you in the relaxation response state can connect you to your intuition, such as relaxation techniques, meditation, guided imagery, yoga, T'ai chi, creativity, play, prayer or connection with your higher power, dreaming, or a meaningful ritual. Listen to and feel all of your senses, not just your thoughts.

Be receptive to what is coming and trust what you are receiving. Play with it and perhaps journal your experience. In time, you will likely come to trust and understand how you intuit, and often draw upon this great tool in your life and for those you serve.

Intuition Resources

I would like to support you to listen to your intuition. It has served me well countless times and when helping others. I teach my clients and health care professionals how to listen to their intuition and become more confident with it. You, too, can quiet your mind, go within, listen, receive messages, and experience the wonderful benefits.

There are several ways to strengthen your intuition. Here are some simple steps to get you started.

- Read "How Do I Listen to My Intuition?" <http://emmyvadnais.com/how-do-i-listen-to-my-intuition>
- Listen to "Inner Wisdom Guided Imagery." Do not listen to while driving. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fUePTnI0Lo&list=UUh_kFsasrtI2F5bEhn7402A
- Take a class taught by Emmy Vadnais, OTR/L. <http://holisticot.org/education-courses>.

To learn more and connect with OTs interested in mind, body, spirit medicine, prevention, and wellness, visit the www.HolisticOT.org website, the Holistic Occupational Therapy Page, Group on Facebook, LinkedIn, and HolisticOT on Twitter, and join the Holistic OT e-mail list.

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