

Honing Your Intuitive Intelligence

Use your gut instinct to get ahead in your fitness career.

I once had \$150 stolen from right under my nose, and I could have easily prevented it if I'd just listened to my intuition.

It happened while I was eating breakfast with three colleagues in a restaurant near a fitness convention site. About midway through our meal, a woman entered the restaurant speaking loudly about her husband and kids, whom she said would be joining her shortly. The woman settled down at a table next to ours and boisterously ordered this and that from the menu, sending the wait staff off in all directions.

Something didn't feel right about the woman, but I ignored the vibe. My intuition finally kicked in full force when I saw her abruptly exit the restaurant (no husband or kids yet in sight). My first instinct was to reach under the table to make sure my purse was still there. It was—whew!

Imagine my shock, though, when I opened my wallet to pay the bill and all my money was gone! The woman, a skilled thief, had managed to extract my wallet from my purse, lift the cash and return the wallet without my noticing. She did the same to one of my colleagues.

That incident taught me an important lesson: honor my instincts about people and situations. These instincts are called “intuitive intelligence.” Tuning in to this type of intelligence can help you in your everyday life and in your fitness career. Here's how.

Using Intuitive Intelligence

Intuition is an instinctive belief about something. Your ability to use it can be valuable in shaping and directing a fitness



business. “An intuitive mindset in the workplace is all about getting out of a strictly logical, analytical, left-brain head, and instead learning to recognize, tap into and rely on other aspects of intelligence,” says Judith Orloff, MD, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles, and author of *Second Sight* (Three Rivers 2010). “Intuitive intelligence allows you to ‘listen’ to hunches, pay attention to odd feelings that seem to come out of nowhere, stop before walking into a dangerous or fishy deal, or take smart risks based on a kind of trust, because something just feels ‘right.’”

Many successful entrepreneurs rely on “gut” feelings. For example, Mike Z. Robinson took a leap of faith in opening his own facility—during the recession. “Even though some people worried that it was a horrible time to start a business, I feel that it couldn't have been a better time,” says Robinson, a personal trainer and owner of MZR Fitness in San Luis Obispo, California. “Landlords were getting desperate and were being really flexible with their terms, so I took full advantage. I'd been planning for a long

time, saw a great opportunity and went for it because it just *felt right*.”

Accessing Your Intuitive Intelligence

To tune in to your intuitive intelligence—and follow your “gut”—consider what body signals might mean in any given situation. This process makes sense for fitness pros in particular because we're so attuned to physical sensations. For example, is that fluttering feeling in your stomach before teaching a class signaling dread, or excitement? What about clenched teeth or sudden muscle tension when a certain colleague comes around? Listening to body signals can help you take the right business steps.

Another aspect of intuitive intelligence is the energy or vibe—positive or negative—you pick up from your interactions with others. Have you ever “clicked” with someone you just met, or found that a new acquaintance rubbed you the wrong way? “The easiest way to think about vibes is in terms of your energy level,” says Orloff. “For example, after having a conversation with someone, see how your energy level

Case Studies in the Fitness Industry

Here are some examples of how fitness pros have used their intuitive intelligence to advantage.

Opening a Business. “I’d been looking at buildings for MZR Fitness for about 2 years, but something was always ‘wrong,’” remembers personal trainer Mike Z. Robinson. “I stumbled upon my current location when I was looking at another location right across the street. I immediately thought it was going to be too much money, but I called the phone number anyway. Apparently, the owner was having a hard time getting someone in there. The moment I looked at it from the inside, it was like love at first sight. I had a ton of butterflies in my stomach, and I didn’t have one initial concern—as I’d always had with the others. I’d found the home for [my business].”

Fitness author and DVD star Tracey Mallett found that her intuition played a strong role in helping her co-found Pilates Thru Life, which offers pre/postnatal continuing education for physical therapists and fitness/Pilates professionals. “I’d been invited to present on Pilates at an international conference in Athens, but worried that I’d have to miss it because of a scheduling conflict with a TV show I was filming in the UK at the same time,” she explains.

“However, I found out that the date of the Athens conference was exactly a week before I was supposed to be in the UK. Not only was it perfect timing, but I would already be in Europe and very close. So off I went to present and had the most amazing time. I realized then that this was the career path of my future—it brought me alive. I met business contacts there that led to presenting at more conferences. If I hadn’t listened to my gut instinct, I wouldn’t be following my true path now!”

Creating a Fitness Product. Corrective exercise expert Anthony Carey, MA, CSCS, used his instincts to help him devise the Core-Tex™, a training device that allows for movement in all three planes of motion with a base that translates at the same time. “I was standing inside of a squat rack in the gym, moving my hips in circles with my feet fixed on the floor to loosen up before squatting,” he says. “I realized I was doing a three-dimensional movement to prepare for what is essentially a one-dimensional movement. While standing there, I immediately visualized my body moving on a surface that does exactly what the Core-Tex does. It was one of the most profound moments of clarity I’ve ever had when it comes to creativity. I knew in my gut that the motion I visualized at that moment was something that could be extremely valuable to promoting proper motion to the body. I can still remember exactly where in the gym I was standing and which squat rack it was. This was more than 12 years ago.”

feels. Do you suddenly feel depleted, exhausted or depressed? Or do you feel energized, happy and lighter?”

These simple insights about people can help guide you toward who to best collaborate with, hire, make purchases from or take on as clients.

Paying Attention to Coincidences

Just as intuition helps you flag a person or situation to avoid, it can also alert you to potentially pleasant outcomes for you and your fitness business. These positive cues might stem from what people call coincidences, synchronicities or good timing.

“Sometimes life itself will present moments of clarity in the form of coincidences. These can be powerful teaching moments,” says Orloff. “For example, you’ve been thinking about quitting your job to become a fitness trainer when you bump into a long-lost friend who tells you about a position that’s opening up at the gym he owns.”

Orloff urges you not to let these precious opportunities pass you by. “Such synchronous events are signals that you are in the right place at the right time, or that you need to stop and pay close attention to what’s in front of you,” she explains.

Trusting Your Instinct

Part of intuitive intelligence is learning to distinguish between business decisions based on fear (“I *should* do this”) versus what feels like a good fit. “Trusting your own gut instinct comes from maturity and confidence in yourself,” says Los Angeles-based Tracey Mallett, author of two books—*Sexy in 6* (Da Capo 2007) and *Super Fit Mama* (Da Capo 2009)—and the star of multiple fitness DVDs. “Deep down you know whether an opportunity is right or not,” she says.

“As I’ve gotten more experienced, I’ve begun to trust my intuition more,” says Anthony Carey, MA, CSCS, corrective exercise expert and author of *The Pain-Free*



Program: A Proven Method to Relieve Back, Neck, Shoulder, and Joint Pain (Wiley 2009). For instance, Carey successfully used intuition when hiring an assistant. “Of the three candidates that I had narrowed it down to, the one that had the least ‘traditional’ experience had the best energy and positive vibes. She has turned out to be spectacular,” says Carey.

While life experience helps, you can sharpen your intuitive decision making at any entrepreneurial stage. “Consult your intuition quite consciously,” says Orloff. Think of a recent career opportunity or replay a meeting with colleagues in your mind. “How does your body feel? Relaxed? Fatigued? Tense? How would you characterize your overall feelings or mood?” poses Orloff. “Doing this regularly, and practicing it, will help you make sound decisions based on intuitive wisdom rather than fear.”

Going With Your “Gut”

Fitness entrepreneurs often take a leap of faith with new career ventures. Part of this leap involves listening to your gut about what would make a viable business idea, what fitness trends to invest in and/or where your true passion lies. That said, consider how your own intuitive intelligence can help guide you along the most gratifying career path possible. ■

Amanda Vogel, MA, holds a master’s degree in human kinetics and is a certified fitness pro in Vancouver, British Columbia. In addition to being the co-author of Baby Boot Camp: The New Mom’s 9-Minute Fitness Solution, she owns Active Voice, a writing, editing and consulting service for the fitness industry. You can reach her at www.activevoice.ca.

© 2010 by IDEA Health & Fitness Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.